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THE IDEA OF FREEDOM IN THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF VIVEKANANDA, AUROBINDO, GANDHI AND TAGORE

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is concerned with the development of the idea of freedom in modern India, and particularly in the political and social thought of four major Indian writers, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose, Gandhi, and Rabindranath Tagore. Three major areas of discussion may be distinguished here.

First, there is a consideration of the common ground on which these four thinkers stand. It is argued that they comprise a "school" of modern Indian thought, both because of the purpose that they share, and the fundamental principles on which they all agree. Chief among these principles is that concerning the nature of freedom. Two broad forms of freedom are distinguished: "external" (political and social), and "internal" (moral and spiritual). These two forms are seen as complementary; as corresponding qualities which must both be achieved for freedom to be wholly realised.

Second, the background of the school's thought is briefly discussed. Certain key themes in the writings of prominent nineteenth-century Indian figures are examined, to suggest the nature of the climate of opinion out of which Vivekananda's conception of freedom emerged.

Finally, the greater part of the thesis is devoted

to an analysis of precisely what these four men thought about freedom, and how one of them, Gandhi, carried on experiments with his ideas in Indian society and politics. It is argued that while all the members of this school agree on fundamental issues, each made a distinctive contribution to the development of the idea of freedom. Vivekananda's contribution arises in the synthesis that he created of various strands of nineteenth-century Indian thought, and which he used in his formulation of a particular conception of freedom. The major aspects of this conception were developed by the other thinkers, each adding new dimensions.

If Vivekananda was the seminal influence behind the school, Aurobindo was its outstanding theoretician. He attempted to show a natural correspondence between individual freedom as self-realisation and social unity as a state of universal harmony in which each had recognized his spiritual identity with all. Gandhi was the most active participant in the nationalist movement. He sought to implement his school's ideas on freedom and harmony with a programme of social and political change; a method rooted in the belief that social progress could only come through a moral transformation of the individual in society. And finally, Tagore; who is seen, here, as the critic or "conscience" of the school, warning it against the cult of Nationalism: the threat to individual freedom and universal harmony which the others had overlooked.

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GLOSSARY

advaita Vedanta:	one school of classical Indian thought which teaches that the sole reality is Brahman, the impersonal World Soul; hence, a doctrine of monism.
ahimsa:	non-violence.
Arthaśastra:	the literature of "wealth" and, more particularly, politics.
atma or atman:	the Self or soul of the individual.
bhakti:	devotion to God; bhakta, the devotee.
brahmacharya:	continence.
Brahmos:	members of the Brahmo Samaj.
dharma:	a complex term, but generally, as used here, "sacred law".
Dharmaśastra:	the literature of dharma; religious texts.
guru:	spiritual teacher.
Kali Yuga:	Dark Age, the era of universal decay which is the present age.
karma:	action or work; karmayoga, the yoga of action.
khaddar:	cloth made of homespun yarn.
Khilafat:	variation of Caliphate.
Lok Sevak Sangh:	people's service organization.
Lokamanya:	"Honoured by the people"; title given to B.G.Tilak.
Maharshi:	great sage or saint.
Mahatma:	great soul.
māyā:	illusion.
moksha or mukti:	spiritual freedom or liberation of the spirit.

panchama: an untouchable.

panchayat: an organ of government, comparable on a local level to a town or village council.

Patañjali: ancient Indian philosopher of Yoga.

Ram Raj: an ideal society; a reign of righteousness, patterned after the legendary rule of Ram.

sadhu (sahdu): Hindu holy man.

Sanātana Dharma: the Eternal Religion.

sannyasa: renunciation; sannyasin, one who has renounced material for spiritual pursuits.

sarvodaya: "the welfare of all".

satya: Truth.

satyagraha: "adherence to the Truth"; truth or soul-force.

Satyayuga: Age of Truth; legendary Indian Golden Age.

shraddha ceremony: that of the customary Hindu funeral rites.

Shvetaketu: the name of a young seeker in the Chandogya Upanishad.

śłok: Sanskrit couplet or stanza.

swadeshi: one's own country; as a movement, the use of goods produced within one's own country.

swaraj or swarājya: self-rule or self-control, used both in the political (national) and moral (individual) sense.

tapasya: penance, the self-discipline associated with asceticism.

tat tvam asi: "Thou art That"; the Upanishadic maxim asserting the identity of the individual soul with the Absolute.

Vaishya: one of the four traditional divisions of Indian society; a caste of merchants and traders.

varnashramadharma: the theoretical social order of ancient India, used by modern Indians as a model for an ideal society.

yajna: religious sacrifice.

CHAPTER I

CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION IN THE MODERN INDIAN IDEA OF FREEDOM

Introduction: Method of Analysis

"The Indian mind," observed Louis Renou in his series of lectures on ancient Indian religions, "is constantly seeking hidden correspondences between things which belong to entirely distinct conceptual systems."[1]

The method of analysis used here will involve two general approaches to the study of modern Indian political and social thought. The first of these will examine the attempt of certain recent Indian thinkers to construct a social and political theory through the development of conceptual correspondences; that is, the relation of select concepts, usually derived from ancient Indian thought, to modern ideas, often imported from the West. The purpose of these particular Indian thinkers was at once to preserve continuity with their own tradition and to introduce conceptual innovations demanded by a society in the midst of rapid transition. Their thought may be considered first, then, as a specific response to the historical situation in which they found themselves. The nature of their response

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1. Louis Renou, Religions of Ancient India (London: Athlone Press, 1953) p.18.

was not unique: other thinkers, of other civilisations, during other periods of social change, have made similar attempts at dealing with the general problem of "continuity and innovation." This work will confine itself exclusively to an analysis of modern Indian political and social thought; of the historical evolution of certain key concepts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It will concentrate on one of these concepts in particular, the idea of freedom, as well as on its development among four major Indian thinkers, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948), and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941).

An analysis of the meaning of freedom has been selected as a central theme for two main reasons. First, during much of this century, India has been engrossed in a national movement for political and social freedom; it is natural that the minds of India's leading political thinkers should have turned increasingly to this issue. A consideration of this particular idea, which occupied a dominant place in their political thought, throws light upon their whole understanding of the nature of politics. Second, their thinking on the meaning of freedom presents a fruitful study in the theme of continuity and innovation. Through the use of this one concept, an analysis may be made of the Western impact on modern Indian political thought, with the

purpose of examining the foreign ideas which that impact introduced, as well as the restatement that it induced of traditional Indian beliefs. In this sense, the idea of freedom offers a notable instance of Professor Renou's comment on the tendency of the Indian mind to seek conceptual correspondences. For, as the idea of freedom occurs in modern India, it is most often seen as a complementary principle; an idea which completes its own meaning through correspondence with other concepts, some derived from the Indian tradition, others incorporated from the West. The intention, here, is to analyse the idea of freedom and the manner in which it complements other themes, so that this may contribute toward a broad understanding of Indian political and social thought.

"There is always a close connection," remarked John Plamenatz in his recent study of Western political philosophy, "between a philosopher's conception of what man is, what is peculiar to him, how he is placed in the world, and his doctrines about how man should behave, what he should strive for, and how society should be constituted."[1]

The second aspect of the method of analysis employed here will involve a consideration of some fundamental questions which have traditionally concerned Western

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1. John Plamenatz, Man and Society, 2 vols., II, (London: Longmans, 1963) p.xvi.

political philosophy. These questions are suggested in the passage quoted from Mr. Plamenatz above, and they may be posed in this form: What is the nature of man? If an Absolute exists, what is its form and its relevance to the sphere of politics? What is the right relation of the individual to society, and what constitutes an ideal social order? And, finally, What is the right method of social and political change? These few questions neither exhaust all the issues examined by Western political philosophers, nor are the problems which they raise exclusively political in nature. They will be used, throughout this study, as a method of analysis, only because they pose questions of the Indian thinkers considered here which reveal the fundamental assumptions of their political and social thought, as well as their essential agreement on basic issues. On the basis of this agreement, these thinkers will be referred to here as a "school" of modern Indian political and social thought.

Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi and Tagore all rested their political and social thought on certain religious beliefs concerning the nature of man and of the Absolute; and these beliefs were, as Mr. Plamenatz's observations would imply, closely connected with their view of "how man should behave, what he should strive for, and how society should be constituted." For each of these Indian thinkers, a divine Absolute exists, and the individual

is seen as part of that Absolute; that is, the nature of man is divine. For each, it followed from these beliefs that the highest aim of man should always remain the discovery of his own nature; the attainment of this goal they called self-realisation or spiritual freedom. In order to achieve this, man's behaviour must be moral. He must follow the dictates of the Absolute, which, as Gandhi so often said, emanated from the "still small voice" within, the individual's own conscience. Once each individual had discovered the Truth of his being, the ideal society might be achieved; a Utopia in which the highest form of freedom was coincident with a perfect state of social harmony. These are, in brief, the assumptions which underlie the thought of the Indians considered here, and this work will attempt to examine the bearing of these assumptions on the development of this school's political and social thought.

Two final remarks should be made regarding the present approach. The first concerns the relative emphasis which will be placed upon each of the four theorists considered. In point of time, Vivekananda was the earliest of this group; the others were all figures of the twentieth century. Vivekananda was thus in a position to exert a seminal influence on modern Indian thought; and, as all of the others have testified, the influence which he did in fact exert was exceptional and profound. On the other hand,

in considering the whole of modern Indian thought, one figure occupies, indisputably, the most important position, both for what he thought and did and also for the immense influence which he had on twentieth-century Indian society. This was Mahatma Gandhi; and more attention will be devoted to him than to any other individual thinker. The least will be given to Tagore; for while his particular contribution to Indian political thought is significant, it is also very specific and limited, contained principally in his short book, Nationalism, and his equally brief controversy with Gandhi. The second point concerns the scant analysis that will be given to comparisons with Western political and social theorists, and the complete omission of contemporary Muslim thinkers. It cannot be denied that comparative analysis of this type may prove fruitful, and offer increased insights into the Indian position. This will not, however, be the approach assumed in this study. Priority will be given here, first, to an understanding of the school's purpose, the nature of its attempt as these four thinkers conceived it; second, to an examination of the climate of thought from which the Indian idea of freedom emerged in the nineteenth century; and, finally, to an analysis of precisely what these men, as Indians, thought about freedom and how they acted upon their thoughts in response to shifting cultural values and increasing pressures for social and political change.

The Western Impact and the Indian Response: "Preservation by Reconstruction"

"The suddenness with which we stepped out of one era into another with its new meaning and values! In our own home, in our neighbourhood and community, there was still no deep awareness of human rights, human dignity, class equality."[1] Tagore's candid characterisation of late nineteenth-century India is representative of his school. Among the attempts to revive Hinduism in the face of the Western impact, incredible claims were made for the Indian past. This school is noteworthy, both for the relative restraint it exercised toward its own past, and for the vigorous attacks it made on the orthodoxy of the present. "There are two great obstacles on our path in India," said Vivekananda, "the Scylla of old orthodoxy and the Charybdis of modern European civilisation."[2] And Vivekananda did see "old orthodoxy" as an obstacle: his vehement tirades against caste and priestcraft make those of the more Westernized reformers look pale in comparison. "I disagree with all those," he said, "who are giving their superstitions back to my people. Like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt,

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1. R. Tagore, Towards Universal Man (London: Asia, 1961) p.347.
2. Swami Vivekananda, The Complete Works, 8 vols., (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) III, p.151.

it is easy to feel an interest in India that is purely selfish. One may desire to see again the India of one's books, one's studies, one's dreams. My hope is to see again the strong points of that India, reinforced by the strong points of this age, only in a natural way. The new stage of things must be a growth from within."[1]

India's growth required, in the minds of these four thinkers, an assimilation of the good aspects of the Western as well as of the Indian traditions. Negative outbursts occurred among them against the whole of Western civilisation; but these were the exception.[2] The main spirit of the school is indicated in these words that Vivekananda addressed to his countrymen:

> Several dangers are in the way, and one is that of the extreme conception that we are the people in the world. With all my love for India, and with all my patriotism, and veneration for the ancients, I cannot but think that we have to learn many things from other nations. We must be always ready to sit at the feet of all, for, mark you, every one can teach us great lessons.... The more you go out and travel among the nations of the world, the better for you and for your country. If you had done that for hundreds of years past, you would not be here today, at the feet of every nation that

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., VIII. (1959), p.266.
2. Gandhi's Hind Swaraj is one of these exceptions, both to the general thinking of the school, and the main stream of Gandhi's own thought as well. A glance at his Autobiography, reveals a broad receptiveness to Western ideals.

> wants to rule India. The first manifest effect of life is expansion. You must expand if you want to live. The moment you have ceased to expand, death is upon you, danger is ahead.[1]

If these thinkers shared relatively few illusions about their own tradition,[2] they had even fewer about the prospects of India achieving its fruition in a Western form. They sought, above all, to create a new harmony out of what they saw as a present state of discord. Nothing troubled Vivekananda more than "Europeanized Indians": "A mass of heterogeneous ideas picked up at random from every source — and these ideas are unassimilated, undigested, unharmonized."[3] And this dissonance, they all believed, was perpetuated by problems which a foreign civilisation had posed, but not solved. Tagore expressed the resultant state of mental turmoil:

> For there are grave questions that the Western civilization has presented before the world but not completely answered. The conflict between the individual and the state, labour and capital, the man and the woman; the conflict between the greed of material gain and the spiritual life of man, the organized selfishness of nations and the higher ideals of humanity; the conflict between all the ugly complexities inseparable from giant organizations of commerce

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., III, p.272.
2. Again, there are exceptions. Aurobindo's Spirit and Form of Indian Polity, following the misleading authority of K.P. Jayaswal, sees a super-abundance of democratic institutions existing in ancient India. See Sri Aurobindo, The Foundations of Indian Culture (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1951) pp.403-13.
3. Vivekananda, op.cit., III, p.151.

> and state and the natural instincts of man crying for simplicity and beauty and fulness of leisure, — all these have to be brought to a harmony in a manner not yet dreamt of.[1]

Tagore, however, did not feel overwhelmed by the Western impact; rather he regarded it as a challenging stimulus to innovation. "The dynamism of Europe," he said, "made a vigorous assault on our stagnant minds — it acted like the torrents of rain that strike into the dry under-earth, give it vital stirrings and bring forth new life."[2] The opportunity he envisioned was to use India's past as a source of inspiration, a platform for reconstruction, on which a modern framework of ideas might be built. Tagore's attitude is representative of the school; and the type of approach it induced was well expressed by Aurobindo:

> Side by side with this movement [of Westernisation in India] and more characteristic and powerful there has been flowing an opposite current. This first started on its way by an integral reaction, a vindication and re-acceptance of everything Indian as it stood and because it was Indian.... But in reality the reaction marks the beginning of a more subtle assimilation and fusing; for in vindicating ancient things it has been obliged to do so in a way that will at once meet and satisfy the old mentality and the new, the traditional and the critical mind. This in itself involves no mere return, but consciously or unconsciously hastens a restatement. And the riper form of the return has taken as its principle a synthetical restatement; it has sought to arrive

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1. R. Tagore, Nationalism (London: Macmillan, 1950) p.51.
2. R. Tagore, Towards Universal Man, pp.342-43.

> at the spirit of the ancient culture and, while respecting its forms and often preserving them to revivify, has yet not hesitated also to remould, to reject the outworn and to admit whatever new motive seemed assimilable to the old spirituality or apt to widen the channel of its larger evolution. Of this freer dealing with past and present, this preservation by reconstruction Vivekananda was in his lifetime the leading exemplar and the most powerful exponent.[1]

No phrase describes better the overriding intent of this school than Aurobindo's term "preservation by reconstruction": the development of "forms not contradictory of the truths of life which the old expressed, but rather expressive of those truths restated, cured of defect, completed."[2]

One of the main purposes behind this reconstruction was the creation of a philosophy of social and political action. The basis for this philosophy was uncovered by Vivekananda in the Bhagavad Gita's theory of karmayoga. Few examples illustrate better the nature of "preservation by reconstruction" than the approach that these thinkers assumed toward the Gita.

> What, however, I have done [said Gandhi] is to put a new but natural and logical interpretation upon the whole teaching of the Gita and the spirit of Hinduism. Hinduism, not to speak of other religions, is ever evolving. It has not one scripture like the Quran or the Bible. Its scriptures are also evolving and suffering addition. The Gita itself is an instance in point. It has given a new meaning

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1. Aurobindo, The Renaissance in India (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1951) pp.39-40.
2. Ibid., p.6.

> to *karma*, *sannyasa*, *yajna*, etc. It has breathed new life into Hinduism.[1]
>
> The Gita is not an aphoristic work; it is a great religious poem. The deeper you dive into it, the richer the meanings you get. It being meant for the people at large, there is pleasing repetition. With every age the important words will carry new and expanding meanings. But its central teaching will never vary. The seeker is at liberty to extract from this treasure any meaning he likes so as to enable to enforce in his life the central teaching.[2]

"The seeker is at liberty to extract from this treasure any meaning he likes...": Gandhi's words bear repetition, for they underline the nature of this school's approach. These men went to their tradition with a purpose, to uncover ideas which would meet the demands of a modern India. They were engaged in a consciously selective effort; and no one was more aware than they of the extent of this selectivity.

The broad rationale behind this eclecticism rested on a distinction between the "essential" and "non-essential" elements of Hinduism. Gandhi's relentless attack on untouchability as an unnatural accretion, which must be purged from the pure state of Hinduism, is the most outstanding example of this approach. But Gandhi's attempt was preceded, a generation earlier, by Vivekananda's stern indictment of "don't-touchism" on precisely the same grounds.[3]

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1. M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 3 October 1936, in *Hindu Dharma* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1950) p.157.
2. Gandhi quoted in Mahadev Desai, *The Gita According to Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1956) pp.133-34.
3. Vivekananda, *op.cit.*, III, p.167.

"In plain words," said Vivekananda, "we have first to learn the distinction between the essentials and the non-essentials in everything. The essentials are eternal, the non-essentials have value only for a certain time; and if after a time they are not replaced by something essential, they are positively dangerous."[1] No member of this school, though, expressed the critical distinction between the spirit and form of Hinduism in more eloquent terms than Tagore:

> The difference between the spirit and the form of religion, like that between fire and ash, should be borne in mind. When the form becomes more important than the spirit, the sand in the river-bed becomes more pronounced than the water, the current ceases to flow, and a desert is the ultimate result.
>
> The spirit of religion says that disrespect for man confers no benefit on him who insults and on him who is insulted, but the form of religion says that failure to obey scrupulously the detailed rules for treating man with cruel contempt is apostasy. The spirit teaches us not to destroy our own souls by inflicting unnecessary suffering on our fellow creatures, but the form warns parents that it is sin to give food and drink on specified days of the month to their widow daughter even to relieve her of the worst suffering. The spirit tells us to atone for evil thoughts and deeds by repentance and by performance of good deeds, but the form prescribes bathing in particular rivers at the hour of solar or lunar eclipse. The spirit advises us to cross seas and mountains and develop our minds by seeing the world, but the form puts an expiatory ban on sea voyage. The spirit tells us to revere all good men irrespective of their caste, but the form

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1. Ibid., p.174.

> enjoins respect for the Brahmin, however unworthy. In sum, the spirit of religion leads to freedom, its form to slavery.[1]

Man, God and Freedom

> The God of heaven becomes the God in nature, and the God in nature becomes the God who is nature, and the God who is nature becomes the God within this temple of the body, and the God dwelling in the temple of the body at last becomes the temple itself, becomes the soul and man — and there it reaches the last words it can teach. He whom the sages have been seeking in all these places is in our own hearts; the voice that you heard was right, says the Vedanta, but the direction you gave to the voice was wrong. That ideal of freedom that you perceived was correct, but you projected it outside yourself, and that was your mistake. Bring it nearer and nearer, until you find that it was all the time within you, it was the Self of your own self.[2]
>
> The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. ... The moment I have realised God sitting in the temple of every human body, the moment I stand in reverence before every human being and see God in him — that moment I am free from bondage, everything that binds vanishes, and I am free.[3]
>
> The Impersonal Being, our highest generalization, is in ourselves, and we are That. 'O Shvetaketu, thou art That.'[4]

The conceptual correspondences, evident in this passage, which are fundamental to Vivekananda's thought, were those drawn among his ideas of human nature, the Absolute, and the meaning of freedom. Man's Self and God

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1. R. Tagore, Towards Universal Man, pp.188-89.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., II (1963), p.128.
3. Ibid., p.334.
4. Ibid., p.334.

are seen by him as interchangeable qualities; and he considers the realisation of this — of the presence of the Absolute in all humanity — to be the decisive factor in the attainment of spiritual freedom. Finally, by alluding to a well-known verse from the Chandogya Upanishad,[1] he links this series of correspondences with the Indian tradition. The Upanishads do, in fact, make these correspondences among the three basic concepts of man, God, and freedom: Brahman, the Absolute, is seen as identical with the human soul, the Ātman, the Self; and with Self-realisation came mukti, spiritual freedom, release from all bondage.[2] Vivekananda adopted the essential elements of this position. Spiritual freedom meant, for him, the ultimate expansion of the human Self, which brought realisation of one's identity with the Absolute, and with all mankind. However, he put this conception of spiritual freedom to an unprecedented use in the development of his social and political thought. The ancient Indian philosophers had never championed social or political liberty in the modern Western sense. The ideal of spiritual freedom which they presented had social implications; but it did not give rise to a theory in defence of

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1. Chandogya Upanishad (6.10.1-6.16.1) in The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, trans. Robert Ernest Hume (O.U.P., 1962) pp.246-50.
2. A.L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York: Grove, 1954) pp.250-51. See also S.N. Das Gupta, A History of Indian Philosophy 5 vols., (CUP: 1922) I, p.58.

the individual's right to free thought and action vis à vis society, the State, or the Nation. Vivekananda attempted to incorporate this modern Western view of political and social liberty into the traditional Indian theory of spiritual freedom.

The crux of his development rested with his insistence that man's expansion or growth demands enjoyment of freedom at all levels of consciousness: physical and material, as well as political and social. Man must have freedom in the lower realms to achieve the spiritual freedom of the highest. The deprivation of such freedom, at any stage of man's evolution, may retard his growth, thwart his quest for Self-realisation. Thus all forms of freedom become desirable, for each may contribute to individual growth.[1] Once this innovation was introduced, though, Vivekananda turned to the task of maintaining continuity. Man may be free, he pointed out, in a physical or intellectual, social or political sense; yet, unless he directs his liberty, on these lower levels of consciousness, toward attainment of the highest goal, spiritual freedom, these lesser freedoms will prove meaningless. "The Hindu," he asserted, "says that political and social independence are well and good, but the real thing is spiritual independence

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., V (1959), p.216.

— Mukti. This is our national purpose..."[1] And, then, in words that were often to be echoed by the later members of his school, Vivekananda said, "One may gain political and social independence, but if one is a slave to his passions and desires, one cannot feel the pure joy of real freedom."[2]

In one important sense, then, Vivekananda stands in agreement with the traditional view that spiritual freedom or moksha represents man's highest goal. In another sense, though, he invests the Indian tradition with a value which was quite foreign. Social and political freedom were presented not only as desirable expectations, but expectations made desirable by traditional figures, often clad in a sannyasin's garb, that symbolized, above all, spiritually free souls. These figures never ceased to stress the supreme desideratum of spiritual freedom; and if this insistence on the value of spiritual freedom directed their attitude toward freedom in other forms, it pervaded, as well, their ideas on man's relation to society and the nature of the good social order.

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1. Ibid., p.458.
2. Ibid., p.419.

The Individual and Society: Freedom, Harmony and Equality

> Freedom and harmony [Aurobindo wrote] express the two necessary principles of variation and oneness, — freedom of the individual, the group, the race, coordinated harmony of the individual's forces and of the efforts of all individuals in the group, of all groups in the race, of all races in the kind — and these are the two conditions of healthy progression and successful arrival. To realize them and to combine them has been the obscure or half-enlightened effort of mankind throughout its history, — a task difficult indeed and too imperfectly seen and too clumsily and mechanically pursued by the reason and desires to be satisfactorily achieved until man grows by self-mastery to the possession of a spiritual and psychical unity with his fellow-men.[1]

The ideal social order was set forth, in ancient India, in the theory of varnashramadharma. The system of four varnas or social orders ensured, in theory, the interrelationship of four social functions: that of the brahman (spiritual authority), kshatriya (temporal power), vaishya (wealth) and śudra (labour). The working of society depended upon the fulfilment, by each of these varnas of its social role as prescribed by dharma, or the sacred law. The remaining element of this theory, that of ashrama, indicated the division of the individual's life into four ashramas or stages of existence: those of the student, the householder, the hermit, and the wandering ascetic (sannyasin). This

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1. Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle in The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity, War, and Self-Determination (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1962) p.84.

social order is seen in the Brihad-Āranyaka Upanishad as divinely created; and right performance of social duty, as set forth by dharma, ensured the harmony of society with the whole of the universe.[1] Only within the framework of varnashramadharma could men attain their individual aims of artha (wealth), kama (pleasure), and dharma (righteousness).[2] The main function of the king was to protect this order and preserve social harmony, "thereby giving the optimum chance of spiritual progress to as many individuals as possible."[3] For the highest aim of man was moksha, spiritual freedom; and the social harmony of the four varnas remained of value only as long as it contributed to individual spiritual advancement through the four ashramas. Emphasis should be placed upon Professor A.L. Basham's recent observation that in ancient India thought "The ultimate aim of all valid and worthy human activity is salvation, which cannot be achieved by corporate entities such as peoples, castes, and families, but only by individual human beings. Government exists to serve society, and, on final analysis, society exists to serve the individual. This latter proposition is hardly to be found in implicit form, but it is a necessary corollary

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1. R.E. Hume, op.cit., pp.84-85.
2. A.L. Basham, "Some Fundamental Ideas of Ancient India." in Politics and Society in India, ed. C.H. Philips (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963) p.13.
3. Ibid., p.16.

of the fundamental presuppositions on which all Hindu thought was based."[1] It was in this manner that the theory of varnashramadharma sought to achieve a perfect correspondence between social harmony and spiritual freedom.

Although traditional Indian thought never viewed government as a force hostile to society, there was among ancient Indian thinkers "general agreement that government is an unfortunate necessity in an age of universal decay."[2] Moreover, in Professor Basham's discussion of the question of whether a theory of the State existed in ancient Indian thought, he argued:

> Many modern scholars, perhaps motivated by the idea that the concept of the state is a sine qua non of a civilized system of political thought, have tried to find evidence of such a concept in ancient Indian political writings. Though they have usually succeeded to their own satisfaction, it seems doubtful whether there was any clear idea of the state in pre-Muslim times. As used in the West the term seems to imply a corporate entity controlling a definite territory, which maintains its identity and continues to exist, irrespective of changes in the governing personnel. In the writings of the more doctrinaire theorists the state seems to take on the character of a living entity, greater than the sum of its parts. In India such political mysticism was discouraged by the doctrine of Dharma, which concerned society and not the state, and by the fundamental individualism of all the metaphysical systems.[3]

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1. Ibid., pp.21-22.
2. Ibid., p.12.
3. Ibid., p.21.

While, then, classical Indian thought cannot be regarded as anti-political, it did see government as an "unfortunate necessity"; and not only did it place the social sphere above that of the political, it also insisted upon the primacy of the individual's spiritual aims.

All four of the modern Indian thinkers considered, here, claim to base their views of the right relation of the individual to society and of the nature of the good society on the classical Indian ideal of varnashramadharma. Society, and never the State, serves for them as the frame-work within which the individual enjoys social harmony and through which he may ultimately attain spiritual freedom. Vivekananda, in describing the "fabric of Aryan civilisation," wrote, "Its warp is varnashramachara, and its woof, the conquest of strife and competition in nature."[1] Tagore, moreover, extols the harmony of the four ashramas as against the discord of "rampant individualism."[2] And Gandhi elevates the value of social duty to a prominent position in his thought. The ideal of varnashramadharma demanded, for him, each individual contributing to the welfare of all by responsibly fulfilling his particular role in society. The avoidance of competition and cultivation of co-operativeness

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., V, p.536.
2. R. Tagore, The Religion of Man, The Hibbert Lectures for 1930 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931) p.202.

and harmony through the disinterested performance of one's social duties: this is the ideal that the modern school envisioned; and they saw it embodied in traditional Indian thought.

If these thinkers drew freely on the traditional Indian theory of society they also introduced critical innovations which had no precedent in the ancient idea of varnashramadharma. The first of these concerns their development of a point of view which was decidedly anti-political. Traditional Indian thought had regarded government as an "unfortunate necessity"; but, undesirable as government may have appeared to the ancients, it still remained a necessity. In both the Dharmaśastra and Arthaśastra literature, the king is seen as an indispensable force for protection of society and maintenance of justice. Spiritual freedom and social harmony were thought attainable within the framework of varnashramadharma, and government became a necessary part of this framework. Since ancient India conceived no idea of the State comparable to that developed in the West, it could make no association of the State with government. The modern Indian thinkers, however, denied that government was a necessary element of varnashramadharma, and this denial was based on the association which traditional Indian thought had not made: that of government with the State. On this basis, the moderns

indicted both State and government as alien to society; and, although one must use extreme care in applying Western terms like "anarchism" to the Indian situation, the fact that both Aurobindo and Gandhi saw themselves as "philosophical anarchists" does indicate the severity of their indictment, as well as their intense distrust of political authority in general.[1] Gandhi is representative of the school, in this respect, in that he regarded "an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because ... it does the greatest harm by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress. ... The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence."[2] The ideal society would be one of "enlightened anarchy", where "everyone is his own ruler, and ... there is no political power because there is no State."[3] This age of enlightened anarchy was not envisaged as a sudden occurrence, but rather as a product of a gradual spiritual evolution. In this perfect age, the moderns hoped, the essential spirit

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1. See also Vivekananda's Utopian vision of an anarchist society, op.cit., III, pp.196-98.
2. M.K. Gandhi, Democracy: Real and Deceptive (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1961) pp.28-29.
3. Gandhi, Young India, 2 July 1931, in Democracy: Real and Deceptive, p.28.

of varnashramadharma might be realized.

The manner in which Vivekananda incorporated the Western idea of political and social liberty into his theory of the individual and society has already been mentioned. In another like attempt at innovation, the school sought to assimilate the Western concept of social equality into its theory of varnashramadharma. Spiritual equality, in the sense that all men were thought part of the divine Absolute, was explicit throughout the traditional writings; perhaps it occurred most notably in advaita Vedanta and the Bhagavad Gita. And it was upon this spiritual basis that the moderns tried to construct an idea of social and political equality. This attempt, once again, began with Vivekananda;[1] but its implications for a programme of social reform were most fully developed by Gandhi.

> In my opinion [said Gandhi] there is no such thing as inherited or acquired superiority. I believe in the rock-bottom doctrine of advaita and my interpretation of advaita excludes totally any idea of superiority at any stage whatsoever. I believe implicitly that all men are born equal. All — whether born in India or in England or America or in any circumstances whatsoever — have the same soul as any other. And it is because I believe in this inherent equality of all men that I fight the doctrine of superiority which many of our rulers arrogate to themselves. I have fought this doctrine of superiority in South Africa inch by inch, and it is because of that inherent belief, that I delight in calling myself a scavanger, a spinner,

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., I. (1962), pp.426-29.

> a weaver, a farmer and a labourer. And I have fought against the brahmanas themselves wherever they have claimed any superiority for themselves either by reason of their birth, or by reason of their subsequently acquired knowledge. I consider that it is unmanly for any person to claim superiority over a fellow-being. And there is the amplest warrant for the belief that I am enunciating in the Bhagavadgita....
>
> But in spite of all my beliefs, that I have explained to you, I still believe in Varnashrama Dharma. Varnashrama Dharma to my mind is a law which, however much you and I may deny, cannot be abrogated.[1]

This is precisely the nature of the attempt at reconstruction which is representative of the school: first, the statement of a spiritual principle; then, its application to the Indian social order, which usually involves criticism of the old orthodoxy; and, finally an insistence that this reinterpretation is consistent with the spirit of the traditional teachings. No single attempt in modern Indian political thought to establish social equality is more significant than Gandhi's attack on caste. The social innovation that Gandhi hoped to achieve was immense; yet he continually couched his pleas for reform in traditional language and themes.

> When we have come to our own, when we have cleansed ourselves, we may have the four varnas according to the way in which we can express the best in us. But varna then will invest no one with a superior status or right, it will invest

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1. Gandhi, Young India, 1927-1928, 29 September 1927, 3 vols., (Madras: S. Ganesan, 1935) III, p.385.

> one with higher responsibility and duties. Those who will impart knowledge in a spirit of service will be called brahmanas. They will assume no superior airs but will be true servants of society. When inequality of status or rights is ended, everyone of us will be equal. I do not know, however, when we shall be able to revive true Varna Dharma. Its real revival would mean true democracy.[1]

In these few lines Gandhi has managed to alternate the themes of continuity and innovation with values from India and the West. The discussion is of the four varnas; but, with Gandhi, they become a framework for social equality. They no longer represent distinctions of social status, but rather opportunities for social service; and those who fulfill the ideals embodied in these transformed varnas become, not good nationalists or democrats, but brahmanas. Gandhi's concluding two sentences, which equate Varna Dharma with democracy illustrate, as sharply as such few words are able, the admixture in his thought of continuity and innovation.

The Western impact reached its ideological high water mark with its introduction of the ideals of freedom and equality. The thinking behind this Indian school's response, the reasoning with which it sought to answer the challenge posed by these two great ideals are expressed well in an early speech of Aurobindo. The assumptions

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1. Gandhi, Harijan, 4 April 1936, in Hindu Dharma, p.339.

underlying this key statement are directly in line with those voiced earlier by Vivekananda; they were to be further developed, not only by Aurobindo himself, in his later phase, but by Gandhi and Tagore as well. Liberty and equality, Aurobindo began, are among the great ideals which have become the "watchwords of humanity," with "the power of remoulding nations and Governments." Then, he continues,

> These words cast forth into being from the great stir and movement of the eighteenth century continue to act on men because they point to the ultimate goal towards which human evolution ever moves. This liberty to which we progress is liberation out of a state of bondage. We move from a state of bondage to an original liberty. This is what our own religion teaches. This is what our own philosophy suggests as the goal towards which we move, mukti or moksha. We are bound in the beginning by a lapse from pre-existent freedom, we strive to shake off the bonds, we move forward and forward until we have achieved the ultimate emancipation, that utter freedom of the soul, of the body or the whole man, that utter freedom from all bondage towards which humanity is always aspiring. We in India have found a mighty freedom within ourselves, our brother-men in Europe have worked towards freedom without. We have been moving on parallel lines towards the same end. They have found out the way to external freedom. We have found out the way to internal freedom. We meet and give to each other what we have gained. We have learned from them to aspire after external as they will learn from us to aspire after internal freedom.
>
> Equality is the second term in the triple gospel. It is a thing which mankind has never accomplished. From inequality and through inequality we move, but it is to equality. Our religion, our philosophy set equality forward as the essential condition of emancipation. All religions send us this message in a different

> form but it is one message. Christianity says we are all brothers, children of one God. Mahomedanism says we are the subjects and servants of one, Allah, we are all equal in the sight of God. Hinduism says there is One without a second. In the high and the low, in the Brahmin and the Sudra, in the saint and the sinner, there is one Narayana, one God and he is the soul of all men. Not until you have realised him, known Narayana in all, and the Brahmin and the Sudra, the high and the low, the saint and the sinner are equal in your eyes, then and not until then you have knowledge, you have freedom, until then you are bound and ignorant. The equality which Europe has got is external political equality. She is now trying to achieve social equality. Nowadays their hard-earned political liberty is beginning to pall a little upon the people of Europe, because they have found it does not give perfect well-being or happiness and it is barren of the sweetness of brotherhood. There is no fraternity in this liberty. It is merely a political liberty. They have not either the liberty within or the full equality or the fraternity. So they are turning a little from what they have and they say increasingly, 'Let us have equality, let us have the second term of the gospels towards which we strive.' Therefore socialism is growing in Europe. Europe is now trying to achieve external equality as the second term of the gospel of mankind, the universal ideal. I have said that equality is an ideal even with us but we have not tried to achieve it without. Still we have learned from them to strive after political equality and in return for what they have given us we shall lead them to the secret of the equality within.[1]

Two observations may be made on this passage. First, Aurobindo's incorporation of the Western values of social and political freedom and equality into his theory of

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1. Sri Aurobindo, Speeches (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1952) pp.93-96.

society is rooted in Vivekananda's earlier distinction between the "spiritual" or "internal" and politico-social or "external" forms of these values.[1] The appropriation of the "internal" forms exclusively to the Indian tradition is noteworthy, and will be considered at length in the next chapter.

Second, again following Vivekananda's lead,[2] Aurobindo sees a necessary correspondence between freedom and equality: "Not until ... the Brahmin and the Sudra, the high and the low, the saint and the sinner are equal in your eyes, then and not until then you have knowledge, you have freedom, until then you are bound and ignorant." Thus, the Indian tradition is made to underwrite a theory of society which embodies not only the old goals of spiritual freedom, spiritual equality, and spiritual harmony, but also the necessary interrelationship of these values with social and political freedom and equality.

Method of Change

> The tidal wave of Western civilisation is now rushing over the length and breadth of the country. It won't do now simply to sit in meditation on mountain tops without realising in the least its usefulness. Now is wanted —

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1. Vivekananda distinguished between two forms of equality, as well as of freedom. See op.cit., I, pp.423-35.
2. Ibid., p.426.

> as said in the Gita by the Lord — intense Karma-Yoga, with unbounded courage and indomitable strength in the heart. Then only will the people of the country be roused, ...[1]

The final principle which unites the members of this school, and reflects their views on the themes of continuity and innovation lies in their attempt to think out a way of right social and political action. All of the thinkers considered here, desired India's political independence and each directed his efforts in some way toward that goal. On the other hand, all saw their task as primarily supra-political in nature: they insisted that though their activities might influence the political sphere, and though their ideas may embrace political issues, their ultimate purpose was beyond politics. This purpose was none other than individual self-realisation; the discovery, by each, of the reality of his own nature. Only in this way, they believed, could a radical transformation of society occur.

The inspiration for a theory of action through which this transformation might be achieved came from Vivekananda. Much of his thought and energy became channeled into the task of awakening a spirit of service among the Indian people; but his plea was always based on the belief that through service to society, the individual would

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., VII. (1958), p.185.

further his own quest for self-realisation. "Look upon every man, woman, and every one as God. You cannot help anyone, you can only serve. ... I should see God in the poor, and it is for my salvation that I go and worship them. The poor and the miserable are for our salvation. ..."[1] No Indian of this age carried this aspect of Vivekananda's thought further than Gandhi. Once, when Gandhi was asked by a Western visitor if his work in the villages was simply "humanitarian", he replied,

> I am here to serve no one else but myself, to find my own self-realisation through the service of these village folk. Man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God, and all his activities, political, social and religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. And this cannot be done except through one's country. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, resourceless and inert that I must concentrate on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity.[2]

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., III, pp.246-47.
2. D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, 8 vols. Revised edition (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-62) IV, p.88.

It is emphatically at this point that the school's views on human nature, the Absolute, freedom and harmony support a programme of social action: the nature of man is divine; through service to mankind the individual may realize his divinity, and with that will come spiritual freedom and a sense of his unity with all being. The effect of this idea was to promote a programme of social, and later, political reform. But at its base, the school's theory of the way of right action is motivated by an intensely individual quest for self-purification and self-realization. Only in this way might the primary aim of the spiritual transformation of the individual in society be achieved.

The end result of Vivekananda's emphasis upon social service was to reconcile an individualistic approach to self-realisation with a programme of social and political reform. In making this attempt at reconciliation, Vivekananda turned to a work which had achieved a similar reconciliation centuries before, the Bhagavad Gita. The problem of the Gita, however, was not Vivekananda's problem: the former sought a philosophical justification for the preservation of a particular social order; the latter desired a dynamic method of social and political change. Yet the formula which the Gita had set forth met Vivekananda's needs. This appeared in the theory of karmayoga (the yoga of action) which taught that one path to self-realisation was disinterested action

for the welfare of society. The individual should act, but in a religious spirit; that is, in a spirit of renunciation and self-sacrifice, surrendering the fruits of his action to God and to mankind. Few concepts have emerged with more meaning for modern Indian thought than that of karmayoga; and Vivekananda, in the concluding chapters of his book called Karma Yoga indicates the meaning that this ideal had for him: "Give up all fruits of work; do good for its own sake; then alone will come perfect non-attachment. The bonds of the heart will thus break, and we shall reap perfect freedom. This freedom is indeed the goal of Karma-Yoga."[1]

The demand for continuity and innovation in the formulation of a method of action was most fully met by Gandhi. Following the lead of Aurobindo, Gandhi stressed the need for political, as well as social, service in the individual's quest for freedom. "I am impatient to realize myself," he said, "to attain moksha in this very existence. My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul.... For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country.... So my patriotism is for me a stage in my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace. Thus it will be seen that for me there are no

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., I, p.107.

politics devoid of religion."[1] And, in his Autobiography he insisted "that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."[2] The marriage of politics and religion had been indicated by Aurobindo; it was consummated in the thought of Gandhi. He, like Aurobindo, blessed the union with sacred symbols and beliefs; unlike Aurobindo, he pointed out the path which both partners should pursue toward their common goal of swaraj. Key traditional words, themes, and images — karmayoga, renunciation, ahimsa — all blossom forth in Gandhi's great innovation of satyagraha.

At least as early as 1896, one may see in Gandhi's pamphlet, Grievances of British Indians in South Africa, the formulation of ideas on the method he later called satyagraha: "Our method in South Africa is to conquer this hatred by love.... We do not attempt to have individuals punished but, as a rule, patiently suffer wrongs at their hands."[3] The teaching of the past, however, to which Gandhi constantly turned at this time is the "precept of the Prophet of Nazareth, 'resist not evil'";[4] and the example of the

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1. Gandhi, Young India, 3 April 1924 in Hindu Dharma, p.13.
2. M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, The Story of My Experiments With Truth (Boston: Beacon, 1960), p.504.
3. Mahatma Gandhi, Collected Works, 9 vols. (The Publications Division: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958-63), VII, p.43.
4. Gandhi, Works, VII, p.108.

present which he repeatedly praises is that of the British suffragettes.[1] Moreover, during this early period in his weekly issues of Indian Opinion Gandhi recounts and extols the lives of Mazzini, Lincoln, Washington and Lord Nelson as supreme examples of selfless sacrifice in service of their countries.[2] And, when in September 1906, he urges the South African Indian community to adopt the first resolution on passive resistance, his charge is that the law in question is "un-British." Gandhi remained throughout his life a cosmopolitan figure responsive to the influences of both East and West; the striking fact, then, about his ideas in this earliest period is not merely his reliance upon Western examples and values, but rather his dependence on them to the utter exclusion of anything Indian.

A development occurs in Gandhi's thinking in a letter of July 1907, to the Rand Daily Mail: "It may appear ungrateful to have to criticize your moderate and well-meant leaderette on the so-called 'passive resistance' to the Asiatic Registration Act. I call the passive resistance to be offered by the Indian community 'so-called', because, in my opinion, it is really not resistance but a policy of communal suffering."[3] Already at this time, Gandhi had

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1. Gandhi, Works, VI, pp.336, 385. VII, pp.65, 73-74, 130, 453.
2. Gandhi, Works, V, pp.27, 50, 84, 111.
3. Gandhi, Works, VII, p.67.

begun to dislike the term "passive resistance," since it was a foreign term which implied principles that he could not wholly accept. "When in a meeting of Europeans," he records in his Autobiography, "I found that the term 'passive resistance' was too narrowly construed, that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it could be characterized by hatred, and that it could finally manifest itself as violence, I had to demur to all these statements and explain the real nature of the Indian movement."[1] Hatred and violence were incompatible with the method that Gandhi had developed because his theory rested squarely on the principle of ahimsa, which he variously translated as "non-violence," "love," and "charity." This idea of ahimsa he had taken from the Indian tradition, and particularly the Jain religion where it meant a strict observance of non-violence. Gandhi fused his own interpretation of this belief with ideas which he found in Tolstoy and The Sermon on the Mount; the result was a principle that evoked rich religious symbolism and contributed to a dynamic method of action unique in Indian history.

Any doubts concerning Gandhi's conscious attempt to establish continuity with the Indian tradition in his search for a method of action may be dispelled by a look at the

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1. Gandhi, Autobiography, p.318.

way in which he coined the term satyagraha — a word which had not heretofore existed.

> To respect our own language, speak it well and use in it as few foreign words as possible — this is also a part of patriotism. We have been using some English terms just as they are, since we cannot find exact Gujarati equivalents for them. Some of these terms are given below, which we place before our readers. ... The following are the terms in question: Passive Resistance; Passive Resister; Cartoon; Civil Disobedience.... It should be noted that we do not want translations of these English terms, but terms with equivalent connotations.[1]

In this manner, Gandhi announced a contest in Indian Opinion for the re-naming of "passive resistance." The thinking behind this idea of a contest is further explained in his chapter "The Advent of Satyagraha", in Satyagraha in South Africa:

> None of us knew what name to give to our movement. I then used the term 'passive resistance' in describing it. I did not quite understand the implications of 'passive resistance' as I called it. I only knew that some new principle had come into being. As the struggle advanced, the phrase 'passive resistance' gave rise to confusion and it appeared shameful to permit this great struggle to be known only by an English name. Again, that foreign phrase could hardly pass as current coin among the community. A small prize was therefore announced in Indian Opinion to be awarded to the reader who invented the best designation for our struggle.[2]

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1. Gandhi, Works, VII, p.455.
2. M.K. Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1961), p.109. Gandhi relates the result of this contest in his Autobiography: "As a result Maganlal Gandhi coined the word 'Sadagraha' (Sat = truth, Agraha = firmness) and won the prize. But in order to make it clearer I changed the word to 'Satyagraha'...", p.319.

Gandhi's remark, here, that a "foreign phrase could hardly pass as current coin among the community" is noteworthy; but far more significant is his candid admission that "I did not quite understand the implications of 'passive resistance' as I called it. I only knew that some new principle had come into being." This last sentence makes clear the personal need Gandhi felt for contact with his own tradition. This was a need which increased as Gandhi himself developed as a political thinker; it first found expression in South Africa.

Satyagraha may be seen as a commentary on the themes of continuity and innovation. The new interpretation of social action found in the theory of karmayoga and the application of traditional language and symbols to the modern Indian scene were Vivekananda's contributions to a method of social and political change. Vivekananda's approach was further developed by Aurobindo. But it was left for Gandhi to carry it to fruition through his experiments with satyagraha. The theory of satyagraha, however, was no more complete an embodiment of continuity and innovation than the satyagrahi, the Mahatma, behind it: a figure seen by some as a sannyasin, by others as a politician; a man who behaved like a karmayogin, yet spoke in these terms of his mission: "It is the whole of Hinduism

that has to be purified and purged. What I am aiming at ... is the greatest reform of the age."[1]

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1. Gandhi, Harijan, 12 August 1933, in Hindu Dharma, p.311.

CHAPTER II

VIVEKANANDA AND THE EMERGENCE OF A PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM IN MODERN INDIA

Vivekananda and His Predecessors

> Even now, [writes Professor A.L.Basham, in his centenary tribute to Vivekananda] a hundred years after the birth of Narendranath Datta, who later became Swami Vivekananda, it is very difficult to evaluate his importance in the scale of world history. It is certainly far greater than any Western historian or most Indian historians would have suggested at the time of his death. The passing of the years and the many stupendous and unexpected events which have occurred since then suggest that in centuries to come he will be remembered as one of the main moulders of the modern world, especially as far as Asia is concerned, and as one of the most significant figures in the whole history of Indian religion, comparable in importance to such great teachers as Shankara and Ramanuja, and definitely more important than the saints of local or regional significance such as Kabir, Chaitanya, and the many teachers of the Nayanmars and Alwars of South India.
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> On the other hand, viewed in the whole sweep of the history of the Hindu religion, we cannot look upon Swami Vivekananda as blazing an entirely new trail, nor certainly, as some otherwise very able missionary writers did in the earlier parts of this century, as a reactionary.... Neither of these pictures is, of course, quite correct. We can only do the great man justice if we also do justice to his predecessors, the people before him who started the process of the revitalization of Hinduism which led up to him, and which continued through the work, of such teachers as Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, and Vinoba Bhave.[1]

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1. A.L. Basham, "Swami Vivekananda: A Moulder of the Modern World" in Vedanta for East and West (July-Aug., XII, No.6, 1963) p.223.

Vivekananda's considerable achievement, as a political thinker, rests largely with the synthesis he created of divergent currents of nineteenth-century Indian thought, channeling them into a main stream of influence which Aurobindo, Gandhi, and Tagore all acknowledged, absorbed, and developed. An appreciation of Vivekananda's accomplishment, then, involves a consideration of "the people before him who started the process of revitalisation of Hinduism which led up to him." Six prominent nineteenth-century Indian thinkers have been selected for analysis: Rammohun Roy, Debendranath Tagore, Keshub Chunder Sen, Dayananda Saraswati, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.[1] Three main themes have been chosen, as well, for examination; each representing a focal point of each thinker's position, as well as indicating main points of contact with Vivekananda's thought. These themes include: the use of Indian tradition to reinforce radical reform movements; the assertion of a distinction between the spirit and form of Hinduism to support social change; and, finally, the discrimination of two forms of knowledge, "physical" and "spiritual," the former being identified with the West, the latter with the Indian

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1. Professor Basham cites all of these figures, in his article, except Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, as key predecessors of Vivekananda. They are listed here in rough chronological order.

tradition.[1] This selection of half a dozen figures, and three major concepts, has been made to sharpen the analysis: the purpose is not to present an exhaustive treatment of nineteenth-century Indian thought; it is rather to concentrate on a few key themes and thinkers; on the roles they played in preparing the climate of ideas in which Vivekanada's thought crystallized.

More than a few studies of modern Indian political thought have begun with the ideas of Rammohun Roy. And Rammohun's reputation is well-deserved. Although he never confronted, in a profound sense, the philosophical problems which have traditionally concerned Western political thought, he did face, with prodigious energy, one of the more formidable challenges of his age: the re-interpretation of Indian tradition in light of the Western impact. His pre-eminence rests with the unprecedented intellectual equipment that he brought to bear on his task: conversant with Sanskrit, Persian, and Bengali, he translated, abridged and interpreted ancient Indian texts; steeped in Christian theology, he debated with British missionaries finer points of Biblical writings in the original Greek and Latin. He

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1. This last theme will be referred to, here, as the "two cultures" theme, indicating its purpose: to distinguish uniquely "Indian" and "Western" cultural patterns and sets of values.

wished to create a new synthesis of Indian and Western ideas; and he sought to embody this creation in his Brahmo Samaj or Society of God, a religious and ethical movement founded in 1828, which exerted a continuing influence on later Indian thought. Rammohun is known for his eloquent advocacy of Western values and institutions: freedom of the press;[1] maintenance of an autonomous judicial system;[2] and extension of the British pattern of education.[3] On the basis of these crucial issues, he has been rightly regarded as a prophet of innovation.

Yet, there was another equally important aspect of Rammohun's thought: a strong commitment to the teachings of his own tradition as he saw them. He lavished praise on the "government under which they [Indians] may enjoy the liberty and privileges so dear to persons of enlightened minds";[4] but he also insisted that this was a state of affairs consonant with the spirit of ancient Indian tradition. In his relentless campaign against satī, Rammohun attacked Hindu orthodoxy, and exhorted reluctant British officials, until the practice was proscribed by law; yet, it should be noted that his arguments do not rest on Western

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1. The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy, ed. by Jogendra Chunder Ghose, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Srikanta Roy, 1901) II, pp.281-86.
2. Ibid., pp.11-18.
3. Ibid., pp.324-27.
4. Ibid., p.118.

evidence or examples, but rather upon his own interpretation of classical Indian texts. His first tract on the subject which takes the form of a dialogue between an advocate and an opponent of satī, begins:

> Advocate. I am surprised that you endeavour to oppose the practice of Concremation and Postcremation of widows, as long observed in this country.
>
> Opponent. Those who have no reliance on the Shastru, and those who take delight in the self-destruction of women, may well wonder that we should oppose that suicide which is forbidden by all the Shastrus, and by every race of men.

The subsequent argument abounds with quotations from the Vedas, the Code of Manu, and the Bhagavad Gita.[1] The sequel to this attack, significantly entitled "Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments On The Ancient Right Of Females, According To the Hindoo Law of Inheritance," is again replete with references to traditional Indian texts in its broad advocacy of the rights of Indian women.[2]

Rammohun's assiduous attempts to use the Indian past in support of social change, were underpinned by his crucial distinction between the spirit and form of Hinduism. The social change that India needed, he insisted, should not be seen as Western reform, but rather as a re-affirmation of the spirit of the Indian tradition. In his Defence of

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1. Ibid., pp.123-192.
2. Ibid., pp.195-208.

Hindu Theism he contends,

> In none of my writings, nor in any verbal discussion, have I ever pretended to reform or to discover the doctrines of the unity of God, nor have I ever assumed the title of reformer or discoverer; so far from such an assumption, I have urged in every work that I have hitherto published, that the doctrines of the unity of God are real Hindooism, as that religion was practiced by our ancestors, and as it is well-known even at the present age to many learned Brahmins: I beg to repeat a few of the passages to which I allude.
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> In the introduction to the abridgment of the Vedant I have said: 'In order, therefore, to vindicate my own faith and that of our forefathers, I have been endeavouring, for some time past, to convince my countrymen of the true meaning of our sacred books, and prove that my aberration deserves not the opprobrium which some unreflecting persons have been so ready to throw upon me.' In another place of the same introduction: 'The present is an endeavour to render an abridgment of the same (in Vedant) into English, by which I expect to prove to my European friends, that the superstitious practices which deform the Hindoo religion, have nothing to do with the pure spirit of its dictates.' In the introduction of the Cenopanishad: 'This work will, I trust by explaining to my countrymen the real spirit of the Hindoo scriptures, which is but the declaration of the unity of God, tend in a great degree to correct the erroneous conceptions which have prevailed with regard to the doctrines they inculcate;'...[1]

And, in his Autobiographical Sketch, Rammohun wrote, "The ground which I took in all my controversies was, not that of opposition to Brahminism, but to a perversion of it; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry[2] of the Brahmins

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1. Rammohun Roy, op.cit., I, pp.126-27.
2. Rammohun often asserted his opposition to "idolatry"; but, as Debendranath Tagore repeatedly pointed out, idolatry for the Brahmos included not only worship of clay images, but all outmoded forms of Hinduism.

was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey."[1] The critical importance, for Vivekananda and others of his school, of this distinction between "the true meaning of our sacred books" and "their perversion" has been indicated in the last chapter; indeed, it provided much of the rationale for the whole attempt at "preservation by reconstruction."

If the distinction between the spirit and form of Hinduism was used to support domestic change within Indian society itself, another means was employed to distinguish the superior nature of the spirit of Indian thought vis à vis the West. This argument sought to draw a sharp dichotomy between the spiritual nature of traditional Indian thought and the materialistic qualities of Western knowledge. Dr. David Friedman has placed this argument in its proper perspective by pointing to its long history as well as to its inevitable shallowness.

> For a long time it has been generally the practice, [writes Dr. Friedman] on the part of both Oriental and European authors to associate the Western and Indian forms of civilisation and thought respectively with an active and affirmative philosophy of life on the one hand, and a pessimistic and "other-worldly" one on the other. Frequently, too,

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1. Ibid., p.319.

> Western positivism, naturalism, secularism, and materialism are confronted with the inborn spirituality, metaphysical idealism, mysticism, and intuitionalism of the East.
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> It is obvious that no such hard-and-fast distinctions between East and West can be made. They are a matter of emphasis rather than fact. Nowhere can the manifold expressions of human thought be imprisoned in watertight compartments. The history of human ideas evolves by contrasts. Although it is true that within the common frame of reference of a particular civilisation new philosophies grow on the basis of the old, they are mostly created in critical opposition to prevailing ideas. There is no doubt that to a large extent modern Western civilisation is dynamic, positivistic, and scientific. Its deeper and essential impulses, however, are derived from a basic philosophical idealism — both Christian and humanistic — which in a perpetual struggle with rigid traditionalism has created the modes of free thought essential to human progress.[1]

The superficiality of such sweeping categorisations, however, did not preclude their widespread use by modern Indian political thinkers. Although Rammohun Roy generally maintained an unbiased position, he did succumb to the temptation of this argument, if only in response to the goading of zealous Christian missionaries.

Rammohun's position appeared in a controversy with a missionary Dr. R. Tytler; the polemical nature of the exchange is suggested in this opening volley from "A Christian" writing in defence of Dr. Tytler's position:

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1. David Friedman, "Hinduism", The Year Book of Education 1951 (London: Evans Brothers) p.226.

> Sir, It is gratifying to the lovers of science, to behold a few intelligent Hindoos emerging from the degraded ignorance and shameful superstition, in which their fathers for so many centuries have been buried.... On the other hand it is a sad contemplation, that these very individuals who are indebted to Christians for the civil liberty they enjoy, as well as for the rays of intelligence, now beginning to dawn on them, should in the most ungenerous manner insult their benefactors, by endeavouring to degrade their religion, for no other reason, but because they cannot comprehend its sublime Mysteries.[1]

Rammohun replied,

> If by the "Ray of Intelligence" for which the Christian says we are indebted to the English, he means the introduction of useful mechanical arts, I am ready to express my assent and also my gratitude; but with respect to Science, Literature, or Religion, I do not acknowledge that we are placed under any obligation. For by a reference to History it may be proved that the World was indebted to our ancestors for the first dawn of knowledge, which sprung up in the East, and thanks to the Goddess of Wisdom, we have still a philosophical and copious language of our own, which distinguishes us from other nations whc cannot express scientific or abstract ideas without borrowing the language of foreigners.[2]

Rammohun does not, as later Indian thinkers were inclined to do, condemn Western technology as nothing but a crass form of materialism; rather, he expresses his "assent and gratitude" for the "introduction of useful and mechanical

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1. Rammohun Roy, op.cit., III, p.145.
2. Ibid., p.148.

arts." Yet, the distinction stands;[1] and it carries with it the claim to a kind of superiority which provided deceptive comfort for later Indian writers. One ramification of this argument was Rammohun's identification (in this same letter) of Christianity with the Indian tradition: "... almost all the ancient prophets and patriarchs venerated by Christians, nay even Jesus Christ himself, a Divine Incarnation and the founder of the Christian Faith, were ASIATICS, so that if a Christian thinks it degrading to be born or to reside in Asia, he directly reflects upon them."[2] This contention, which seeks to explain Western moral and spiritual ideas on the basis of the Asian origin of Christianity, ignores, of course, the long and profound development of these ideas in a European context; yet, the argument became an accepted tenet of Indian thought, reiterated by Vivekananda.

These, then, were the three themes as set forth by

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1. Rammohun's differentiation between "science" and "useful mechanical arts" points out another prominent tendency of modern Indian thinkers: the attempt to appropriate the whole field of scientific studies to ancient Indian thought. The long development of Western thinking on science is then reduced to "technology", an inferior outgrowth of the tradition of science as begun in India. The point, here, is not, of course, that India lacked early scientific achievements; it is only that any attempt to draw sharp distinctions of this nature inevitably neglects, by the very logic of the argument, similar accomplishments of other civilisations.
2. Rammohun Roy, op. cit., III, p.149.

Rammohun Roy; and his statement of them in this early period of modern Indian thought, indicates, in part, the seminal nature of his influence. Perhaps more important than this, however, Rammohun's thought manifests the divergent directions which Indian ideas were already following in response to the Western impact. The fact that Rammohun may be seen both as the progenitor of the more Western-orientated reform movement led by Ranade and Gokhale, as well as a proponent of themes later developed by Vivekananda, has earned him the title, "The Father of Modern India."[1] Yet, Rammohun may also be seen as a figure in whom the main intellectual currents of the period had already begun to assert their stark contradictions; and the problem which these contradictions posed became an increasingly urgent one for men in search of harmony.

The inheritor of Rammohun's mantle, as leader of a revivified Brahmo Samaj, was Debendranath Tagore. Rammohun's vigorous efforts at purifying Hinduism, that its spirit might prevail over its perversions, were continued by Debendranath; and he, like his predecessor, became concerned with the use of Indian tradition in fostering reform movements. There is, however, a noteworthy difference between them: if Rammohun represents a cosmopolitan scholar standing

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1. Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., Sources of Indian Tradition (OUP: 1958) p.572.

astride two great traditions and committed, wholly, to neither; a figure suggesting, to India, the choice to be made: then, in Debendranath, the path has been chosen; for he went further than Rammohun, he became the Maharshi, sage of India.

> We are in and of the great Hindu community [he declared] and it devolves upon us by example and precept to hold up as a beacon the highest truths of the Hindu shastras. In their light must we purify our heritage of customs, usages, rites, and ceremonies and adapt them to the needs of our conscience and our community. But we must beware of proceeding too fast in matters of social change, lest we be separated from the greater body whom we would guide and uplift.[1]

An insight, not found in Rammohun's writings, into the deeply personal struggle for a reconciliation of Western with Indian ideas occurs in Debendranath's Autobiography. If Rammohun's attempts at syncretism often appear as purely academic pursuits, Debendranath's narratives reveal an intense psychological commitment to the task at hand.

> As on the one hand [he writes in his Autobiography] there were my Sanskrit studies in the search after truth, so on the other hand there was English. I had read numerous English works on philosophy. But with all this, the sense of emptiness of mind remained just the same; nothing could heal it, my heart was being oppressed by that gloom of

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1. Quoted in deBary, op.cit., p.610.

> sadness and feeling of unrest. Did subjection to Nature comprise the whole of man's existence? I asked. Then indeed are we undone. The might of this monster is indomitable.... What can we hope for, whom can we trust? Again I thought, as things are reflected on a photographic plate by the rays of the sun, so are material objects manifested to the mind by the senses; this is what is called knowledge. Is there any other way but this of obtaining knowledge? These were the suggestions that Western philosophy has brought to my mind. To an atheist this is enough, he does not want anything beyond Nature. But how could I rest fully satisfied with this? My endeavour was to obtain God, not through blind faith but by the light of knowledge. And being unsuccessful in this, my mental struggles increased from day to day. Sometimes I thought I could live no longer.
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> Suddenly, as I thought and thought, a flash as of lightning broke through this darkness of despondency. I saw that knowledge of the material world is born of the senses and the objects of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. But together with this knowledge, I am also enabled to know that I am the knower. Simultaneously with the facts of seeing, touching, smelling, and thinking, I also come to know that it is I who see, touch, smell, and think. With the knowledge of objects comes the knowledge of the subject; with the knowledge of the body comes the knowledge of the spirit within. It was after a prolonged search for truth that I found this bit of light, as if a ray of sunshine had fallen on a place full of extreme darkness. I now realised that with the knowledge of the outer world we come to know our inner self.[1]

"I now realised that with the knowledge of the outer world we come to know our inner self": this is the correspondence that Indian thinkers stress throughout the nineteenth

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1. Debendranath Tagore, The Autobiography of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore trans. Satyendranath Tagore and Indira Devi (London: Macmillan, 1916) pp.47-49.

century; in this they found a reconciliation between their understanding of the West as "outer world," and of the Indian tradition as embodying the "inner self." It is ironic that men who possessed such a remarkable facility for making conceptual correspondences should have been so sorely tested by their own needlessly stark differentiation between the philosophies of East and West. Debendranath's narrative places their problem in the perspective it deserves: this was not always a clever chauvinist contrivance to assert a form of cultural superiority, but often an honest belief, which, to a considerable extent, victimised its believers.

When, in 1859, Keshub Chunder Sen entered the Brahmo Samaj and quickly became the chief disciple of Debendranath Tagore, it appeared that its future leadership was ensured. Yet, in six years, the organization was to be irrevocably split by disagreement, Keshub withdrawing to form his own movement. One source of conflict between Debendranath and his disciple was the former's suspicion of Keshub as a "semi-Europeanised young innovator," a "denationalised radical."[1] In one sense, such doubts are understandable: Keshub appears to have been a highly complex personality, who could be seen by Debendranath as a semi-Europeanised innovator, and by a

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1. P.C. Mozoomdar, The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1891) p.96.

Western academic as the prophet of "the Indianisation of Christianity."[1] He was, like Rammohun Roy, a representative of two traditions, but, unlike Rammohun, he pursued each with an intemperate zeal that rendered his great aim in life, a harmony of Eastern and Western thought, if anything, all the more difficult to attain. His complexity is further shown by Mozoomdar's passing observation that Keshub was visited, on his deathbed by Ramakrishna, Debendranath Tagore, and the Bishop of Calcutta.[2] There was a little of each of these figures in Keshub himself, and his life and thought may be seen as an attempt to harmonise his own, as well as the world's diversities.

One of the most ardent advocates of social reform of his age, Keshub established, in 1870, the "Indian Reform Association"; patterned after its European counterparts, its aims sharply conflicted with Hindu orthodoxy. Yet Keshub did not see himself as a Europeanised reformer:

> What is the programme of reforms you think I intend to lay before you this evening? Not half-measures, like the education of this section of the community or the reformation of that particular social evil. I would most emphatically say that I do not belong to that school of secular reformers according to whom Indian reform means nothing more than strong garrisons on the frontier, irrigation, female education, intermarriage, and widow-marriage.

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1. Stephen Hay, in deBary, op.cit., p.615.
2. Mozoomdar, op.cit., p.279.

> These cannot — it is my most firm conviction — these cannot lift India as a nation from the mire of idolatry, of moral and social corruption. If you wish to regenerate this country, make religion the basis of all your reform movements.[1]

This religion, he made clear, must be based not on the forms but on the spirit of Hinduism: "Upon the surface of Hinduism floats what is popular, superstitious and erroneous. Its deeper spirituality does not often come within the range of our observation. He therefore who dives below and rescues and restores the buried pearls will have done most valuable service not only to his own country but to the whole religious world."[2] Keshub dove, and came up with a universal gospel which he called "The New Dispensation, The Religion of Harmony." Yet his devotion to harmony did not blind him to the highly distinctive characteristics of the two traditions which he sought to fuse.

In his essay, "The New Dispensation — Its European and Its Asiatic Side," he wrote,

> The faith that has come down to us from heaven has two aspects, the one eastern and the other western. It has a European side, and the other side is eminently Asiatic. The East loves and honours the New Dispensation as its own, and so does the West. Those traits in it which are of the European style are as follows:--

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1. Keshub Chunder Sen's Lectures in India, Part II, (Calcutta: The Brahmo Tract Society, 1900) p.187.
2. Keshub Chunder Sen, The New Dispensation or the Religion of Harmony (Calcutta; Bidhan Press, 1903) p.81.

The New Dispensation is thoroughly scientific. It hates whatsoever is unscientific. It has an abhorence of delusions and myths.

It is empirical, and relies upon observation and experiment. It has no hypothesis, and it takes nothing on trust.

It stands the severest logical tests, and is made up of demonstrable truths.

It is supported by reasoning, inductive and deductive.

It harmonizes with the latest discoveries of science and keeps pace with the progress of philosophy and exact science.

The Asiatic and oriental aspect of the New Dispensation remains to be explained. Born in the East, amid its peculiar traditions and influences, it is no wonder that it should grow as an Asiatic institution with marked Asiatic features. However occidental its development may have been, its root is essentially oriental. Its industry and dialectics, its intellectual and practical character tell us it is a western system of faith. But there are other features in it which show forth its eastern origin. Wherein consists this oriental character we show below....

The New Dispensation is transcendentally spiritual. Its eyes are naturally turned inward and they see vividly the spirit-world within.

It prefers the soul-kingdom to the kingdom of the senses. It abhors materialism.

It always magnifies the spirit, and spiritualizes everything it touches.

It sees with the spirit-eye and hears with the spirit-ear. It drinks inspiration.

It builds the eternal city, the kingdom of heaven within, and dwells therein all the spare hours of the day.

The New Dispensation is the religion of poverty and asceticism....

It is the object of the Church of the New Dispensation:--

To reconcile and harmonize the various systems of religion in the world.

To make all churches in the East and the West one undivided and universal Church of God....

To reconcile ancient faith and modern science.

To reconcile philosophy and inspiration.

> To reconcile asceticism and civilization.
> To reconcile pure Hinduism and pure Christianity.
> To harmonize the East and West, Asia and Europe, antiquity and modern thought.[1]

The dichotomy is drawn here in its sharpest possible outline: this devotee of harmony saw little, in Asia and the West, that was not in need of harmonising. Indeed, the traits of the two traditions are polarised, in Keshub's writings, far more than in some thinkers less sympathetic than he with the Western tradition.

The attitude, if not the doctrine, of Swami Dayananda Saraswati resembles that of Vivekananda more than any of the early Indian thinkers. For with Dayananda, the Indian response to the West becomes militant: the attempt is not merely to defend Hinduism, but to construct, on its basis, a philosophy of strength. The first source of Dayananda's influence appears in the sheer aggressiveness of his approach, which made an indelible impression upon later Indian theorists.

> Among the great company of remarkable figures [wrote Aurobindo] that will appear to the eye of posterity at the head of the Indian Renascence, one stands out by himself with peculiar and solitary distinctness, one unique in his work. It is as if one were to walk for a long time amid a range of hills rising to a greater or lesser altitude, but all with sweeping contours, green-clad, flattering the eye even in their most bold and striking elevation. But amidst them all,

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1. K.C. Sen, New Dispensation, pp.250-54.

> one hill stands apart, piled up in sheer strength, a mass of bare and puissant granite, with verdue on its summit, a solitary pine jutting out into the blue, a great cascade of pure, vigorous and fertilising water gushing out from its strength as a very fountain of life and health to the valley. Such is the impression created on my mind by Dayananda.[1]

Rammohun and Debendranath each had his skirmishes with the missionaries; at one point, in his Autobiography, Debendranath proudly tells of a successful confrontation with zealous Christians and concludes, "thenceforward the tide of Christian conversion was stemmed, and the cause of the missionary received a serious blow."[2] But if Rammohun and Debendranath were content with stemming the Western tide, Dayananda tried to reverse it. And, for a moment in Indian history, this figure did stand, powerful and defiant, declaring that all truth, spiritual and scientific, inhered in the Vedas; India's emancipation, he insisted, depended on nothing more than devotion to her own tradition. In 1875, Dayananda founded the Arya Samaj[3], which continued this militant tradition; but his main thrust quickly lost its momentum, rejecting as it did that element which became central to Vivekananda's whole approach: a frank assimilation of Western ideas. Although few Indian writers followed Dayananda's particular interpretations of the Vedas,

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1. Sri Aurobindo, Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1955) p.39.
2. Debendranath Tagore, op.cit., p.101.
3. "Society of the Aryas"

Aurobindo's remark that "Dayananda's work brings back such a principle and spirit of the past to vivify a modern mould,"[1] indicates the influence which the general direction of his effort exerted.

Dayananda's attempt to underwrite social change with passages from Vedic texts was the most uncompromising of any of the early Indian reformers. In the Vedas, Dayananda discovered a striking consonance with nineteenth-century Western views on marriage and widow re-marriage; education and the rights of women; the constitutional nature of good government and the supremacy of law; the desirability of a fluid class structure; and, on the need for India to engage in international trade, commerce, and social intercourse.[2]

If Dayananda did find all of this in the Vedas, he was at least aware of what to look for: if he saw no need of importing ideas from a foreign source, he ceaselessly sought the reconciliation, in his own way, of the Indian tradition with the flood of new ideas that surrounded it. This overriding concern for harmony is expressed in the closing sentences of his major work, Satyarth Prakash, in terms that resemble those later to be used by Vivekananda:

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1. Aurobindo, Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p.45.
2. Dayananda Saraswati, Light of Truth or Satyarth Prakash, trans. Chiranjiva Bharadwaja (Lahore: K.S.V. Bharadwaja, 1927). The respective pages are: 81, 23, 28, 74, 150, 152-3, 73, 87, 299.

> The sole aim of my life, [writes Dayananda] which I have also endeavoured to achieve, is to help to put an end to this mutual wrangling, preach universal truths, bring all men into the fold of one religion whereby they may cease to hate each other and, instead, may firmly love one another, live in peace and work for their commonweal. May this doctrine, through the grace and help of God, with the support of all truthful, honest and learned men who are devoted to the cause of humanity reach every nook and corner of this earth so that all may acquire righteousness, wealth, gratify legitimate desires and attain salvation and thereby elevate themselves and live in happiness. This alone is the chief object (of my life).[1]

Dayananda represents an extreme form of the nineteenth-century return to the Indian tradition, and his position has often been sharply contrasted by Western writers with that of Rammohun Roy: the former, founder of the Arya Samaj, usually appears as a vociferous, uncompromising reactionary; a sad, but understandable casualty of the revivalist movement. Rammohun, conversely, is often portrayed as a liberal, tolerant, and objective eclectic. On the basis of the analysis of the three themes considered here, however, there appears to be considerable agreement between these two reformers: each used the Hindu tradition to encourage social change and each reinterpreted his religion in the process. Each based his interpretation on a distinction between the spirit and form of Hinduism, contending that post-Vedic accretions were perversions of

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1. Ibid., p.685.

ancient wisdom. On the last theme, Dayananda and Rammohun both assumed Indian supremacy in the realm of spiritual knowledge; Rammohun, however, admitted the unprecedented nature of Western technology, whereas Dayananda's argument becomes a reductio ad absurdum with the discovery of fire-arms and electricity in the Vedas. Yet they joined in a common quest for reconciliation of the divergent streams of thought prevalent in nineteenth-century India. It may be legitimately argued that substantial differences occur in their respective interpretations of Hinduism, but the fundamental similarities in their responses to the Western impact must also be affirmed.

The consideration, here, of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee will concentrate on his novel Anandamath, which has been called "Bankim's greatest contribution to the early growth of nationalism."[1] In this work, he set down the words of "Bande Mataram" (literally, "Hail to the Mother") which eventually became the anthem of the Indian nationalist movement. "It was thirty-two years ago," wrote Aurobindo in 1907, "that Bankim wrote his great song and few listened; but in a sudden

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1. T.W. Clark, "The Role of Bankimcandra in the Development of Nationalism," in Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, ed. C.H. Philips (OUP, 1961) p.438.

moment of awakening from long delusions the people of Bengal looked round for the truth and in a fated moment somebody sang Bande Mataram. The mantra had been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism."[1] In the final chapter of Anandamath a remarkable passage occurs which embodies, in a condensed form, many of the ideas dominant in Bankim's period; and, in its distinction between "spiritual" and "physical" knowledge, it indicates clearly the two cultures theme.

The historical background of Anandamath is the Sannyasi Rebellion in Bengal of the 1770's, which is described by Hastings.[2] The novel's heroes are a band of sannyasis led by Satyananda, an irreproachably pure but rather belligerent ascetic. At the conclusion of the story the sannyasis have defeated the Muslims and British in battle. Satyananda wants to pursue the rebellion, attacking the main British force in Calcutta, thus liberating the Motherland from foreign domination. At this point, however, Bankim has a supernatural character intervene, who, speaking to Satyananda with the voice of God, counsels him as follows:

> He. Hindu dominion will not be established now. If you remain at your work, men will be killed to no purpose. Therefore come.

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1. Sri Aurobindo, Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p.13.
2. J.K. Das Gupta, A Critical Study of the Life and Novels of Bankimcandra (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1937) p.104.

S. (greatly pained). My lord, if Hindu dominion is not going to be established, who will rule? Will the Muslim kings return?

He. No. The English will rule.

S. (turning tearfully to the image of her who symbolized the land of his birth). Alas, my mother! I have failed to set you free. Once again you will fall into the hands of infidels. Forgive your son. Alas, my mother! Why did I not die on the battle field?

He. Grieve not. You have won wealth; but it was by violence and robbery, for your mind was deluded. No pure fruit can grow on a sinful tree. You will never set your country free in that way. What is going to happen now is for the best. If the English do not rule, there is no hope of a revival of our eternal Faith. I tell you what the wise know. True religion is not to be found in the worship of 33 crores of gods; that is a vulgar, debased religion, which has obscured that which is true. True Hinduism consists in knowledge not in action. Knowledge is of two kinds, physical and spiritual. Spiritual knowledge is the essential part of Hinduism. If however physical knowledge does not come first, spiritual knowledge can never be born. If you do not understand the physical body, you will never comprehend the subtle spirit within. Now physical knowledge has long since disappeared from our land, and so true religion has gone too. If you wish to restore true religion, you must first teach this physical knowledge. Such knowledge is unknown in this country because there is no one to teach it. So we must learn it from foreigners. The English are wise in this knowledge, and they are good teachers. Therefore we must make the English rule. Once the people of India have acquired knowledge of the physical world from the English, they will be able to comprehend the nature of the spiritual. There will then be no obstacle to the true Faith. True religion will then shine forth again of itself. Until that happens, and until Hindus are wise and virtuous and strong, the English power will remain unbroken. Under the English our people will be happy; and there will be no impediment to our teaching our faith. So, wise one, stop fighting against the English and follow me.[1]

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1. Translation by T.W. Clark in op.cit., pp.442-443.

Spiritual knowledge is regarded, here, as "the essential part of Hinduism," and, considering the source of the counsel, is thought superior to physical knowledge. Yet the latter, explicitly associated with the English, becomes a prerequisite for spiritual knowledge: "If however physical knowledge does not come first spiritual knowledge will never comprehend the subtle spirit within." And, "Once the people of India have acquired knowledge of the physical world from the English, they will be able to comprehend the nature of the spiritual." The closest correspondence is thus drawn, here, as in Debendranath's thought, between these two forms of knowledge; and the whole of the two cultures theme is set forth as explicitly, in this passage, as in the writings of any of Vivekananda's predecessors.

Influences upon Vivekananda Assessed

A main purpose of this chapter has been to suggest that the climate of opinion within which Vivekananda developed his political thought had a profound effect on his conclusions, and that the nature of this influence was both Western and Indian in character. A closer examination may now be made of more specific aspects of these influences. On the Western side, the main sources were British liberal

thought and Christianity. Mr. T.W. Clark, in his article "The Role of Bankimcandra in the Development of Nationalism," has pointed out Bankim's own acknowledgement of English influences on his ideas of freedom and of the evolution of society. "By reading English," Bankim said, "Bengalis have learned two new words, Liberty and Independence."[1] Moreover, Bankim specifically names Darwin and Herbert Spencer as the inspirations for his theory of social evolution.[2] Since the concepts of both freedom and social evolution are central concerns for Vivekananda, the extent of direct Western influence on these two ideas, as they occur in his thought, should be examined.

In regard to Vivekananda's idea of freedom, it was observed in the last chapter that he attributes his conception of political and social liberty to Western thought; and, since Vivekananda was acquainted with Utilitarian ideas, especially those of J.S. Mill, he may easily have derived this concept from there, or from eighteenth and nineteenth-century British liberal thought in general. Although the idea of political liberty was only one facet of Vivekananda's conception of the meaning of freedom, the

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1. As quoted in T.W. Clark, in op.cit., p.442.
2. Ibid., p.434.

inspiration of this one aspect, at least, was undoubtedly Western.

The extent of Darwin's and Spencer's influence on Vivekananda's theory of evolution deserves consideration for, as a student of the natural sciences, Vivekananda had, of course, read Darwin, and he later became so attracted to Spencer's thought that he corresponded with him. A cursory comparison of Spencer's ideas with those of Vivekananda indicates some broad similarities: each made freedom a central concept in his political thought; each held government in suspect as a threat to individual liberty; and each envisioned as his utopia, "the blessedness of final anarchy."[1] Finally, both emphasized the evolutionary nature of man's development in society as a moral being, rising to increasingly higher levels of consciousness.[2]

A closer examination of their thought, however, reveals in the fundamental differences between them, the crucial points at which Vivekananda stressed traditional Indian themes. First, Spencer respected liberty; but not in a spiritual sense, as the supreme goal of all human existence. Spencer prided himself too much on the "scientific" nature of his philosophy to speak of freedom as did

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1. Sir Ernest Barker, Political Thought in England, 1848 to 1914 (OUP. 1947) pp. 79-80.
2. Ibid., p.83.

Vivekananda: "The awakening of the soul," said the latter, "to its bondage and its effort to stand up and assert itself — this is called life. Success in this struggle is called evolution. The eventual triumph, when all slavery is blown away, is called salvation, Nirvana, freedom."[1] Both men saw in the evolutionary process the grand story of human development; but with Vivekananda the process began with "the awakening of the soul" and ended with the attainment of spiritual liberation.

An equally fundamental difference appears in their respective views of the dynamics of evolution. Spencer conceives the final level of human development as a stage of social integration and harmony; but when referring to the evolution towards that state he always speaks in terms "of struggle, selection, and survival of the fittest as the laws of society."[2]

Vivekananda, conversely, denies that such laws exist, and sees the evolutionary process governed not by competition, but a peaceful unfolding of man's nature. Not only did he attempt to refute the positions of Spencer and Darwin, on this point; he tried to do it, characteristically, with the use of traditional Indian sources. His most complete statement on evolution was made in a discussion on

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., VIII, p.249.
2. Ernest Barker, op.cit., p.114.

the Darwinian theory, with the Superintendent of the Zoological Garden at Alipur.

> You are certainly aware [said Vivekananda] of the laws of struggle for existence, survival of the fittest, natural selection and so forth, which have been held by the Western scholars to be the causes of elevating a lower species to a higher. But none of these has been advocated as the cause of that in the system of Patanjali. Patanjali holds that the transformation of one species into another is effected by the "in-filling of nature." (प्रकृत्यापूरात्) It is not that this is done by the constant struggle against obstacles. In my opinion, struggle and competition sometimes stand in the way of a being attaining its perfection. If the evolution of an animal is effected by the destruction of a thousand others, then one must confess that this evolution is doing very little good to the world. Taking it for granted that it conduces to physical well-being, we cannot help admitting that is a serious obstacle to spiritual development. According to the philosophers of our country, every being is a perfect Soul, and the diversity of evolution and manifestation of nature is simply due to the difference in the degree of manifestation of this Soul. The moment the obstacles to the evolution and manifestation of nature are completely removed, the Soul manifests Itself perfectly. Whatever may happen in the lower strata of nature's evolutions, in the higher strata at any rate, it is not true that it is only by constantly struggling against obstacles that one has to go beyond them. Rather it is observed that there the obstacles give way and a greater manifestation of the Soul takes place through education and culture, through concentration and meditation, and above all through sacrifice. Therefore, to designate the obstacles not as the effects but as the causes of the Soul-manifestation, and describe them as aiding this wonderful diversity of nature, is not consonant with reason. The attempt to remove evil from the world by killing a thousand evil-doers, only adds to the evil in the world. But if the people can be made to desist from evil-doing by

> means of spiritual instruction, there is no more evil in the world. Now, see how horrible the Western struggle theory becomes![1]

Vivekananda is replying to the West, and though this in itself establishes some influence from Darwin and Spencer, a more important implication lies in the nature of his response: his emphasis is consistently upon a harmony rather than a conflict of interests; an evolution which is spiritual in nature and attains its highest level "above all through sacrifice" — a theme later developed by Aurobindo, Gandhi and Tagore.

The necessary interrelation of conflict and progress has been a recurrent theme of modern Western political thought: it appears, throughout the nineteenth century, not only in minor figures like Herbert Spencer, but in the ideas of Hegel and Marx as well. And, at the close of that century, in 1896, before a Harvard seminar, Vivekananda spoke out against "that horrible idea of competition," and continued, "The more I study history, the more I find that idea to be wrong. Some say that if man did not fight with man, he would not progress. I also used to think so; but I find now that every war has thrown back human progress by fifty years instead of hurrying it forwards. The day will come when men will study history from a different light and

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., VII, pp.152-153.

find that competition is neither the cause nor the effect, simply a thing on the way, not necessary to evolution at all."[1] Thus, while Spencer and Vivekananda both stress the evolutionary nature of man and society, substantial differences remain in their respective views on the nature of man, the Absolute, and the meaning of freedom. These fundamental differences occur not only between Vivekananda and Spencer: they are representative of this school's general position vis à vis modern Western political thought.

The greatest Western influence on Vivekananda, in a direct personal sense, probably came from the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. Christianity, in general, introduced many ideas, of course, which shaped the intellectual atmosphere of nineteenth-century India; and Vivekananda was well exposed to them during his education in the Scottish Church College of Calcutta.[2] But he seems to have been especially moved by the life of Christ, and he readily acknowledged it. "Had I lived in Palestine in the days of Jesus of Nazareth," he once said, "I would have washed His feet, not with my tears but with my heart's blood!"[3] It is significant, too, that Vivekananda, immediately after Ramakrishna's death, gathered the disciples

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., V, p.278.
2. Eastern and Western Disciples, The Life of Swami Vivekananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) p.24.
3. Ibid., p.449.

together, and preached to them of Jesus Christ: "Naren began to tell the story of the Lord Jesus," relates one of Vivekananda's disciples, "beginning with the wondrous mystery of his birth through his death onto the resurrection. Through the eloquence of Narendra, the boys were admitted into that apostolic world wherein Paul had preached the gospel of the Arisen Christ and spread Christianity far and wide. Naren made his plea to them to become Christs themselves, to aid in the redemption of the world; to realise God and to deny themselves as the Lord Jesus had done."[1] Whether the original inspiration for some of Vivekananda's ideas came from Christian or Indian influences, Vivekananda makes clear that they were at least confirmed by the teaching of Christ.

Among Indian influences, the analysis may be made on the basis of the three themes which have been traced in the writings of Vivekananda's predecessors. Each of these themes represents a crucial element in Vivekananda's thought. In one sense, Vivekananda was as radical a social reformer as any that had preceded him: "Everything," he asserted, "has now to be recast in new moulds."[2] These new moulds, however, were designed after old patterns: "It is out of this [the Indian] past that the future has to be moulded,

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1. Ibid., p.159.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., VII, p.33.

this past will become the future."[1] The difference between reform which drew on the Indian tradition, and that which did not, became, for Vivekananda, a most crucial distinction: the latter seemed to him destructive, while the former, at its best, furthered a natural evolutionary process, in accord with the deeper needs of Indian society. "To the reformers," he said, with Ranade especially in mind, "I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root-and-branch reform. Where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction, mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth."[2] There were many elements in the Indian tradition which Vivekananda emphatically rejected, and his idea of growth meant that India must not merely recall her past, but improve upon it.[3] His desire to resolve the tension created by this clash of two traditions becomes clear in his plea, "Let us be as progressive as any nation that ever existed, and at the same time as faithful and conservative towards our traditions as Hindus alone know how to be."[4]

The method he employed, as a social reformer, to

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., IV, (1955) p.234.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., III, p.213.
3. Ibid., p.454.
4. Ibid., p.174.

underpin his arguments involved a distinction between the spirit and form of the Indian tradition.[1] This means had been used many times before him; but no Indian, prior to Vivekananda, had pressed this distinction so forcefully upon his countrymen. The strength of Vivekananda's influence lay with the fact that like Dayananda, he was a Swami who symbolised the sacred in Hindu culture; but, unlike Dayananda, Vivekananda had carried the "spirit" of Hinduism to the West. With his addresses to the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he scored an extraordinary triumph: a victory which resounded throughout India. Thus, when Vivekananda returned home, he came as a conquering hero. When he spoke of the "spirit" of Hinduism, drawing parallels with Western philosophy and science, he commanded the attention of the educated Indian élite; and, when he derided India's crumbling superstitious "forms", the impact on the Indian people, though not as great as that later made by Gandhi, was far more powerful than that of Rammohun Roy or Keshub Chunder Sen.

If Vivekananda's Western experience strengthened, in the eyes of many Indians, his movement for social change, it also persuaded Vivekananda himself of the validity of the two cultures theme. While in England and America, in the 1890's,

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1. See Chapter I for a further statement on this point.

Vivekananda was often called "the first Hindu missionary to the West," and, though the impact that he made on the natives, there, remains questionable, there is no doubt that the experience deeply influenced Vivekananda's own thinking. The distinction between "spiritual India" and "empirical West" pervades his works, and has implications for every phase of his thought. He was probably familiar with this theme before he left India; but it crystallized in his mind during his years in the West.

Even the most sympathetic reader of Vivekananda must be shocked with the absurd generalisations found throughout his long essay (written in Bengali), "The East and The West".[1] All the old distinctions already cited in the speeches of Keshub appear, here, in their grossest form, supplemented with countless detailed differences which Keshub had somehow overlooked. The main argument of the essay is that "every nation has a corresponding national idea,"[2] and the ideas of India and of the Western nations are at sharp variance:

> With us, the prominent idea is Mukti; with the Westerners, it is Dharma. What we desire is Mukti: what they want is Dharma. Here the word 'Dharma' is used in the sense of the Mimamsakas. What is Dharma? Dharma is that which makes man seek for happiness in this world or the next. Dharma is established on

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1. See, for example, the criticism of a reasonably sympathetic Western commentator, Albert Schweitzer, Indian Thought and Its Development (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1956) p.221.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., V, p.443.

> work; Dharma is impelling man day and night to run after and work for happiness.[1]
>
> That inward vision of the Hindu and the outward vision of the West, are manifest in all their respective manners and customs. The Hindu always looks inside, and the Westerner outside.[2]

The implications of this facile polarisation of Eastern and Western cultural values for Vivekananda's idea of freedom soon became clear. "The Greek," he argued, "sought political liberty. The Hindu has always sought spiritual liberty."[3] "To care only for spiritual liberty and not for social liberty," he continued, "is a defect, but the opposite is a still greater defect. Liberty of both soul and body is to be striven for."[4]

A close parallel to this conception of freedom occurs with Bankim's discrimination of two forms of knowledge. Bankim, moreover, set forth not only this distinction but also a theory of social evolution. He even implies in the conclusion to Anandamath, that the highest stage of social evolution in India will occur when the two forms of knowledge coalesce and spiritual truth illuminates society. "Once the people of India have acquired knowledge of the physical world from the English, they will be able to comprehend the nature of the spiritual. There will then be

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1. Ibid., p.446.
2. Ibid., p.478.
3. Vivekananda, Vi (1963) p.86.
4. Ibid., p.86.

no obstacle to the true Faith. True religion will then shine forth again of itself." Vivekananda applied these correspondences drawn by Bankim to the idea of freedom: the types of spiritual and physical knowledge were not only associated with higher and lower forms of freedom; these forms were seen as corresponding stages of an evolutionary process. "Once the people of India," Vivekananda might well have paraphrased Bankim's Anandamath, "have acquired knowledge of social and political freedom from the English, they will be able to comprehend the nature of spiritual freedom. There will then be no obstacle to their spiritual liberation."

There is no conclusive evidence that any of Vivekananda's predecessors considered thus far exercised a direct personal influence on his thought. If writers like Debendranath, Keshub, and Bankim, made a significant contribution it lies in their impact on the general climate of thought in late nineteenth-century Bengal. Vivekananda, as a student, lived in the midst of a remarkable flowering of intellectual, literary and artistic achievement which has been well termed "The Renascence of Hinduism."[1] While he was studying in Calcutta, and attending meetings of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Bankim was publishing his influential

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1. Stephen Hay in deBary, op.cit., p.602.

periodical Banga Darśan and writing his best known novels, notably Anandamath (1882). Indians were speaking with excitement of Keshub's oratory, with reverence of Debendranath's example: and Rammohun's achievements were already passing into legend. It would have been unnatural if Vivekananda, surrounded by such an atmosphere of ideas, had not absorbed many of them. The most decisive personal influence, however, upon the whole of Vivekananda's thought came neither from the philosophers of Europe, nor the Prophet of Nazareth, nor the Brahmo sages of Calcutta. It came rather from the priest of a small Hindu temple on the Ganges: Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, an uneducated mystic who often plunged into ecstatic visions as he worshipped Kali, the Mother Goddess, became Vivekananda's guru and transformed him. The next chapter will consider the nature of this transformation, its effect upon Vivekananda's thought, and the subsequent development of his idea of freedom.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT AND NATURE OF VIVEKANANDA'S IDEA OF FREEDOM

> Vive Ranade and the Social Reformers! — but, oh India! Anglicised India! Do not forget, child, that there are in this society problems that neither you nor your Western Guru can yet grasp the meaning of — much less solve![1]
>
> Vivekananda's Reply to Ranade, 1900

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda: The Special Relationship

Unlike Rammohun and Debendranath, Ramakrishna had neither learning, wealth, nor social position;[2] but like them, he attracted and influenced some of Bengal's leading artists and social reformers. Unlike Keshub and Dayananda, Ramakrishna abhorred both oratory and proselytism; like

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., IV, p.307.
2. An amusing anecdote from the sayings of Ramakrishna conveys well his differences with the Maharshi. It concerns his first meeting with Debendranath: "We talked a long time. Devendra was pleased and said to me, 'You must come to our Brahmo Samaj festival.' 'That,' I said, 'depends on God's will. You can see my state of mind. There's no knowing when God will put me into a particular state.' Devendra insisted: 'No, you must come. But put on your cloth and wear a shawl over your body. Someone might say something unkind about your untidiness, and that would hurt me.' 'No,' I replied, 'I cannot promise that. I cannot be a babu.' Devendra and Mathur laughed. The very next day Mathur received a letter from Devendra forbidding me to go to the festival. He wrote that it would be ungentlemanly of me not to cover my body with a shawl." Ramakrishna, Prophet of New India, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Rider, 1951) p.234.

them, though, he sought harmony of the medley of ideas which surrounded him. Unlike Bankim, Ramakrishna enjoyed neither a government position nor literary success; yet, like him, he inspired in his admirers, a resurgent pride in the Indian tradition. And, like all five of the other reformers, Ramakrishna's teachings imply both a radical re-interpretation of orthodox Hinduism and profound social change; yet, unlike them, his ideas and efforts convey a sense of ease, innocence and harmony which their strenuous efforts at syncretism never paralleled. "Amid the hubbub of these self-conscious efforts to check the advance of Christian influence, Hindu society suddenly discovered in its midst a genuine saint and mystic. In the end, Sri Ramakrishna's simple devotion to the traditional concepts and deities of his faith proved a more effective force than all the oratory of his predecessors."[1]

The relationship which Vivekananda had with Ramakrishna was not of a student and teacher, as that is commonly understood in the West, but rather of a disciple and guru. Ramakrishna did influence Vivekananda's thinking on fundamental philosophical problems, but this came after Vivekananda's intense psychological commitment to him as his guru. It is difficult to describe the nature of this relationship; and better, perhaps, to allow its meaning to

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1. Stephen Hay, in deBary, op.cit., p.603.

appear through Vivekananda's own narrative.

The first meeting between Vivekananda and Ramakrishna occurred in November 1881, at the priest's temple in Dakshineswar, Bengal. The two men were Bengalis, spoke a common language, and had been raised in Hindu homes; beyond that, they shared few likenesses. Vivekananda, then known by his real name, Narendranath Datta, had been born, in 1863, into a wealthy, aristocratic, kayastha[1] family of Calcutta lawyers. His father had insisted upon him receiving a good Western-type education, and when he first visited Ramakrishna, he was well on his way to a career in law. Ramakrishna, twenty-seven years Vivekananda's senior, was the son of a brahman, a village priest; his education consisted of memorizing devotional hymns to Kali rather than of studies in language or the natural sciences. When Vivekananda first met Ramakrishna, just five years before the latter's death, Ramakrishna was nearing the conclusion of a life of severe spiritual discipline; and he believed that he had at last achieved self-realisation through ecstatic devotion to Kali. The striking differences between these two men become manifest in Vivekananda's narrative of

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1. Biographical accounts state that Vivekananda was a kshattriya, e.g., Romain Rolland, The Life of Ramakrishna (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) p.222; and D. MacKenzie Brown, The White Umbrella (Univ. of Calif., 1958) p.87. Further research, however, has indicated that Vivekananda was a kayastha, a social group which is sometimes, but not always, included within the kshattriya caste.

that first encounter at Dakshineswar:

> ... he [Ramakrishna] suddenly rose and taking me by the hand led me to the northern verandah, shutting the door behind him. It was locked from the outside; so we were alone. The next moment he stood before me with folded hands and began to address me, 'Lord, I know you are that ancient sage, Nara — the Incarnation of Narayana — born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind,' and so on!
>
> I was altogether taken aback by his conduct. 'Who is this man whom I have come to see,' I thought, 'he must be stark mad!'[1]

Vivekananda understandably avoided a second meeting with Ramakrishna for some time but eventually his curiosity overcame him. The second encounter had profound consequences:

> I thought he might do something queer as on the previous occasion. But in the twinkling of an eye he placed his right foot on my body. The touch at once gave rise to a novel experience within me. With my eyes open I saw that the walls, and everything in the room, whirled rapidly and vanished into naught, and the whole universe together with my individuality was about to merge in an all-encompassing mysterious void! I was terribly frightened and thought that I was facing death, for the loss of individuality meant nothing short of that. Unable to control myself I cried out, 'What is it that you are doing to me! I have my parents at home!' He laughed aloud at this and stroking my chest said, 'All right, let it rest now. Everything will come in time!' The wonder of it was that no sooner had he said this than that strange experience of mine vanished. I was myself again and found everything within and without the room as it had been before.
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> All this happened in less time than it takes me to narrate it, but it revolutionised my mind. Amazed I thought what it could possibly be. It came and went at the mere wish of this wonderful man![2]

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1. Eastern and Western Disciples, op.cit., pp.45-46.
2. Ibid., p.48.

During the five years preceding Ramakrishna's death, Vivekananda gradually reconciled his differences with his guru. The harmony which finally prevailed between them, however, allowed each to place varying emphasis upon different themes. "There is no doubt about it that many of the most important of Vivekananda's doctrines, and most of his greatest inspiration, were derived from his Master, but given an individual interpretation which was Vivekananda's own."[1]

The conceptual correspondences drawn by Ramakrishna among his fundamental beliefs are found not only in the thought of Vivekananda, but in that of Aurobindo, Gandhi and Tagore as well. "God alone has become everything," he said, "All things that we perceive are so many forms of God."[2] If the Absolute is immanent in all life, it is most clearly manifest in man: "If you seek God then seek Him in man; He manifests Himself more in man than in any other thing."[3] This is the essential position on the ideas of the nature of man and of the Absolute which Vivekananda ultimately adopts. His acceptance, however, came only after a prolonged period of doubt, during which he questioned, first, the existence of God, and then the belief that

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1. A.L.Basham, "Swami Vivekananda: A Moulder of the Modern World," op.cit., pp.224-25.
2. Ramakrishna, op.cit., p.195.
3. Ibid., p.243.

God exists in all being. Realisation arrived in a sudden moment of contact with Ramakrishna:

> The magic touch of the Master that day immediately brought a wonderful change over my mind. I was stupefied to find that really there was nothing in the universe but God! I saw it quite clearly but kept silent, to see if the idea would last. But the impression did not abate in the course of the day. I returned home, but there too, everything I saw appeared to be Brahman.... When I became normal again, I realised that I must have had a glimpse of the Advaita state. Then it struck me that the words of the scriptures were not false. Thenceforth, I could not deny the conclusions of the Advaita philosophy.[1]

For Vivekananda, the philosophy of Advaita precluded belief in a personal God;[2] Ramakrishna, however, insisted that the two positions were not incompatible, and believed in both. The implications of this difference between them are reflected in their respective views on social service. Devotion to a God who is immanent, implied, for both, devotion to the divine in man. It requires only another step to see this as a directive to active social service for the welfare of mankind. This was a position which Ramakrishna accepted, but did not adopt as the main tenet of his teaching. Not service to mankind, but an ecstatic, mystical, highly individualistic devotion to God: this was the essence of Ramakrishna's message. He leaves no doubt, in his sayings, which path he encouraged: "Sambhu Mallick

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1. Eastern and Western Disciples, op.cit., pp.65-66.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., I, p.376.

once talked about establishing hospitals, dispensaries, and schools, making roads, digging public reservoirs, and so forth. I said to him: 'Don't go out of your way to look for such works. Undertake only those works that present themselves to you and are of pressing necessity; and perform them in a spirit of detachment.' It is not good to become involved in many activities. That makes one forget God. Coming to the Kālighāt temple, some, perhaps, spend their whole time in giving alms to the poor. They have no time to see the Mother in the inner shrine!"[1] Yet there was a theme of service implicit in Ramakrishna's teaching and it was this theme which Vivekananda chose to develop. Here, again, as seen in the following narrative of a disciple, Vivekananda's own interpretation proved decisive:

> Hardly had he [Ramakrishna] uttered the words, 'Compassion to all creatures', when he fell into Samadhi. After a while he came back to a semi-conscious state of mind and said to himself, 'Compassion for creatures! Compassion for creatures! Thou fool! An insignificant worm crawling on earth, thou to show compassion to others! Who art thou to show compassion? No, it cannot be. It is not compassion for others, but rather service to man, recognising him to be the veritable manifestation of God!' Everyone present there, no doubt, heard those words of Shri Ramakrishna uttered from the innermost consciousness of his soul; but none but Naren could gauge their meaning. When Naren left the room he said to the others, 'What a strange light have I discovered in those wonderful words of the

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1. Ramakrishna, op.cit., p.138.

> Master! How beautifully has he reconciled the ideal of Bhakti with the knowledge of the Vedanta, ... Service of man, knowing him to be the manifestation of God, purifies the heart, and in no time, such an aspirant realises himself as part and parcel of God, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. Those words of Shri Ramakrishna throw an altogether new light upon the path of devotion. Real devotion is far off until the aspirant realises the immanence of God. By realising Him in and through all beings and by serving Him through humanity, the devotee acquires real devotion.... All his activities should be directed to the service of man, the manifestation of God upon earth, and this will accelerate his progress towards the goal'.[1]

The last sentence of this passage suggests those correspondences which are central to Vivekananda's idea of the way of right action: he who directs his activities to the service of man, the manifestation of the Absolute, moves towards spiritual freedom. Out of this theory evolved the conception with which Vivekananda's name has become closely identified: the ideal of karmayoga. While Ramakrishna had explicitly discouraged karmayoga as a method subordinate, in this age of Kali Yuga, to bhakti,[2] Vivekananda emphasized the"yoga of action"above all others, and developed the idea, in a modern context, so that it assumed implications which Ramakrishna had not foreseen. "Karma Yoga," Vivekananda said, "is the attaining through unselfish work of that freedom which is the goal of all

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1. Eastern and Western Disciples, op.cit., pp.107-109.
2. Ramakrishna, op.cit., p.139.

human nature."[1] The karmayogin symbolised the spiritually free individual, working with a sense of renunciation for the uplift of humanity. As this idea was finally developed, it held two major implications for Vivekananda's political thought: the first concerns the modern Indian idea of social and political leadership; the second involves Vivekananda's theory of the right method of social and political change.

Vivekananda's portrayal of the karmayogin as a free man, spontaneously virtuous and uniquely capable of love and compassion is not new to the Indian tradition; indeed, Ramakrishna saw the conception in this light. The development that emerges with Vivekananda lies in his emphasis upon the free individual as a national leader, a disinterested social reformer, working in a spirit of renunciation to secure values which were often foreign to the Indian tradition. "We must prove," said Vivekananda, "the truth of pure Advaitism in practical life. Shankara left this Advaita philosophy in the hills and forests, while I have come to bring it out of those places and scatter it broadcast before the work-a-day world and society."[2] This was the role of the karmayogin: a part played by Vivekananda himself, in a social if not in a political sense. And the

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., I, p.110.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., VII, p.162.

correspondences which he drew anticipated the emergence on the Indian political scene of a karmayogin par excellence, Mahatma Gandhi.

In writing of the "traditional ideal of the guru or teacher, better called 'spiritual advisor'," Karl Potter observes in his study of classical Indian philosophy:

> That those only are fit to guide who have gained mastery of their subject is a commonplace requirement; but the relationship of the student to his guru, an especially intimate one, requires the teacher not only to have mastered the variety of subject-matters included in the 'curriculum' but also, and more important, to have such insight and superior awareness — coupled with the ability to carry out the decisions that insight dictates — as to be always cognizant of his pupil's innermost needs as well as master of the exactly appropriate ways of satisfying them. It is no wonder, with this ideal in mind, that the gifted teacher remains in contemporary India a figure highly fitted in the mind of the community to take on the added burdens of political leadership. Nor is it any wonder that, in the light of the correspondence we have noted between hero, saint, and teacher, the men who appeal to Indians as leaders have been respected and revered as being at one and the same time all three. Because of their superior understanding, such men are held to be worthy of everyone's trust and allegiance, even despite apparent external inconsistencies in their behaviour. The hero, the yogi, and the guru exemplify superior mastery of themselves and their environment; they, among men, most closely approximate the ideal of complete control or freedom.[1]

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1. K. Potter, Presuppositions of India's Philosophies, (N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963) p.5.

The karmayogin was indeed synonomous, in Vivekananda's view, with the classical conceptions of the hero and the guru; and it was this figure, embodying these three symbols rolled into one, surrounded with an aura of saintliness and spiritual power, that became a dominant image in modern Indian political thought. The yogin had realised his own nature, attained freedom and was thus unquestionably fitted, not only to serve mankind, but to lead it in all spheres of action.

The second implication of Vivekananda's ideas on the way of right action appears in his theory of social change. Far more than Ramakrishna, Vivekananda concerned himself with social and economic reform. Yet, the main point of his teaching was the inevitable impermanency of all reform unless it emanated from a spiritual transformation of the individual in society. "We may convert every house in the country into a charity asylum, we may fill the land with hospitals, but the misery of man must still continue to exist until man's character changes."[1] In a political sense, this meant that Vivekananda had little faith in the ability of administrative or legislative action to secure lasting social reform:

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., I, p.53.

> There is a class which still clings on to political and social changes as the only panacea for the evils in Europe, but among the great thinkers there, other ideals are growing. They have found out that no amount of political or social manipulation of human conditions can cure the evils of life. It is a change of the soul itself for the better that alone will cure the evils of life. No amount of force, or government, or legislative cruelty will change the conditions of a race, but it is spiritual culture and ethical culture alone that can change wrong racial tendencies for the better.[1]

These thoughts were often echoed later by Aurobindo and Tagore. Even Gandhi, who immersed himself in political activity, always held firm to the belief that social and political change could occur only through a moral transformation of the individual in society.

A final consequence of the different paths chosen by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in their quest for realisation emerges with the relative importance they attribute to reason and to God's grace as aids to the attainment of spiritual freedom. There was little place in Ramakrishna's thought for reason. "One should not reason too much," he told his disciples, "it is enough if one loves the Lotus Feet of the Mother. Too much reasoning throws the mind into confusion. You get clear water if you drink from the surface of the pool. Put your hand deeper and stir the water and it becomes muddy. Therefore pray to God for

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., III, p.182.

devotion."[1] Neither Vivekananda nor any of the other members of his school places the power of reason above that of faith: the highest truth was knowledge of the Absolute; and Ramakrishna and Vivekananda agreed that this may be perceived only with intuition. At the same time, however, Vivekananda, as well as Aurobindo, Gandhi, and Tagore, believe that reason should be developed as much as possible as a help to intuition, and that reason may be superseded only when its limits have been fully reached. "On reason," said Vivekananda, "we must have to lay our foundations, we must follow reason as far as it leads, and when reason fails, reason itself will show us the way to the highest plane.... Real inspiration never contradicts reason, but fulfills it."[2] Man, having attained the highest reasoning power of any animal, must exploit it, as he should all his faculties, in his search for knowledge.

The second implication of Ramakrishna's devotional approach to God is reflected in an emphasis upon the need of His grace for spiritual liberation. "You may try [to see God] thousands of times," he said, "but nothing can be achieved without God's grace."[3] Whereas, when a disciple asked Vivekananda, "Can salvation (Mukti) be

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1. Ramakrishna, op.cit., p.160.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., I, p.185.
3. Ramakrishna, op.cit., p.158.

obtained without the grace of God?" he replied, "Salvation has nothing to do with God. Freedom already is."[1] This difference is reflected, above all, in the tone of their teaching. Ramakrishna, the bhakta, said, "I never feel like saying, 'I am Brahman.' I say, 'Thou art my Lord and I am thy servant.' The feeling 'I am He' is not wholesome. A man who entertains such an idea, while looking on his body as the Self, causes himself great harm. He deceives himself as well as others."[2] But with Vivekananda the message became tat tvam asi; and Vivekananda's speeches pulsate with an exalted self-confidence not found in Ramakrishna: "Truth alone triumphs, and this is true," he said, "I am the Infinite."[3] There is a gentle strength, nevertheless, in Ramakrishna's simple piety that attracted many Bengali intellectuals, Vivekananda among them, and gave them a new pride in their tradition; the power of Vivekananda's teaching is of a different nature, irrepressible, aggressive, and dynamic. One complemented the other; and, together, they became a profound source of inspiration for Indian political thought in the twentieth century.

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., V, p.317.
2. Ramakrishna, op.cit., p.157.
3. Vivekananda, op.cit., I, p.502.

Freedom, Equality and Harmony: A Conceptual Trinity

> In the world history I believe that the great man whom we celebrate will always have an important place, in that he, more than any other teacher in the India of his time, taught his fellow Indians how to assimilate the old with the new.
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> It was Vivekananda, more than any other teacher of his generation, who taught India self-respect, inspired his fellows to accept their own traditional culture, their own traditional values, their own traditional way of life, but to mould them and alter them as seemed necessary, pruning away the dead wood, and developing the new, here and there grafting on ideas borrowed from the West and from other sources, but still keeping the parent tree alive and flourishing. For that, more than to any other individual of the period, India owes a debt to Swami Vivekananda.[1]

For centuries Western political thinkers have discussed the idea of freedom; many have analysed it in a far more systematic and profound manner than did Vivekananda. The concern, here, however, is with Vivekananda's contribution to Indian, not Western, political thought; and a large part of this contribution rests with his attempt, in his thinking about freedom, "to assimilate the old with the new." The remainder of this chapter, then, will concentrate on this process of assimilation as it occurred in his thought with the idea of freedom and its related concepts: equality and harmony.

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1. A.L.Basham, "Swami Vivekananda: A Moulder of the Modern World," op.cit., p.225.

When Bankim Chandra Chatterjee commented that Bengalis had learned the word "liberty" from the British, he indicated the way many Indian intellectuals of his time saw the concept of freedom: as social and political liberty, set forth by nineteenth-century liberalism. Rammohun, Debendranath, and Keshub all understood freedom primarily in this sense. And, as Brahmo reformers, they became advocates of civil liberties: Rammohun's campaign for the abolition of satī sought a form of social liberty; his statement against restrictions on the press was a fervent plea for intellectual freedom; and he directed his re-interpretation of the Vedanta against idolatry in the name of religious freedom. One of the most memorable passages, moreover, in Debendranath's Autobiography, is the narrative set against the background of his father's death. His family had insisted upon the traditional performance of religious rites in spite of his view of the shraddha ceremony as involving idolatry. This was finally resolved, for Debendranath, by a dream in which his deceased mother appeared to him and approved of his own convictions. The dream did not quell the family pressure, or their threats of social ostracism; it only assured Debendranath that he was right in his struggle for personal freedom.[1] Painful experiences of this kind characterised the opposition of many Indian

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1. D. Tagore, op.cit., pp.112-20.

reformers to the mores of their own society; and, in their struggle with orthodoxy, they exalted the Western value of political and social liberty.

[wrote Keshub Chunder Sen]

> The love of freedom/is the chief characteristic of the present age. This would be at once evident if we consider the boastful spirit of self-gratulation in which men talk of their living in the 'nineteenth century.' Aspirations for freedom and aversion to all manner of slavery so thoroughly pervade the spirit of the age, that they find their expression in the very name of the present century, and mark it as pre-eminently and emphatically the age of freedom. This love of freedom manifests itself in all departments of speculation and practice. In politics, men aspire to that form of government in which every section of the community may be fairly and fully represented. In education, the cry all over the civilized world is — enlighten the masses, and deliver them from the bondage of ignorance. In society, there is an earnest struggle to break through the fetters of tradition, custom, and conventionalism. In religion also we see the effects of a strong desire to enfranchise the spirit. It has unsettled men's faith in old doctrines and dogmas, and shaken their respect for authority. It has led men to believe that nothing short of the most fearless and independent investigation will enable them to obtain truth.[1]

The early Brahmo leaders' admiration and advocacy of freedom, then, was clear and unequivocal. Almost a century after Rammohun Roy's appearance on the Indian scene, B.C. Pal, assessing the contribution of the Brahmo Samaj to the

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1. K.C. Sen, Lectures and Tracts (London: Strahan, 1870) p.131.

struggle for independence, could write,

> ... the Raja stood out from the very beginning of his public career as the apostle of personal freedom. And it was in this message of personal freedom first delivered by Raja Rammohun Roy to modern India that our present Freedom Movement had really its birth. It is therefore impossible to separate the Movement of the Brahmo Samaj from the general Freedom Movement or what is now called the Swaraj Movement in Modern, that is, British India. We cannot appraise the real value and vitality of this Swaraj Movement unless we study it in its historical evolution from the movement of personal freedom, or the protest of individual reason and conscience of the Brahmo Samaj against all outside authority whether of scriptures or of traditions."[1]

Yet, for all this discussion of liberty, the early Brahmos never seem to have foreseen that development in the idea of freedom which later became crucial for Pal and his contemporaries: while the Brahmos consistently sought to underwrite social change with traditional Indian values, they found no basis, in the Indian tradition, for the idea of freedom. It was left for Vivekananda to draw the correspondence, which the Nationalists later found so fruitful, between the Western idea of social and political liberty and the ultimate value of classical Indian thought, spiritual freedom.

> Now the question is: [Vivekananda asked] Is it for the good of the public at large that social rules are framed, or society is formed? Many reply to this in the affirmative;

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1. B.C. Pal, Brahmo Samaj and the Battle of Swaraj in India (Calcutta: Brahmo Mission Press, 1926) pp.4-5.

some, again, may hold that it is not so. Some men, being comparatively powerful, slowly bring all others under their control and by stratagem, force or adroitness gain their own objects. If this be true, what can be the meaning of the statement that there is danger in giving liberty to the ignorant? What, again, is the meaning of liberty?

Liberty does not certainly mean the absence of obstacles in the path of misappropriation of wealth etc., by you and me, but it is our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence or wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others; and all the members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education or knowledge. The second question is; Those who say that if the ignorant and the poor be given liberty, i.e. full right to their body, wealth, etc., and if their children have the same opportunity to better their condition and acquire knowledge as those of the rich and the highly situated, they would become perverse — do they say this for the good of society, or blinded by their selfishness? In England too I have heard, 'Who will serve us if the lower classes get education?'

For the luxury of a handful of the rich, let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education, society will be upset!

Who constitute society? The millions — or you, I, and a few others of the upper classes?

Again, even if the latter be true, what ground is there for our vanity that we lead others? Are we omniscient?

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं 'One should raise the self by the self.' Let each work out one's own salvation. Freedom in all matters, i.e. advance towards Mukti, is the worthiest gain of man. To advance oneself towards freedom, physical, mental and spiritual, and help others to do so, is the supreme prize of man. Those social rules which stand in the way of the unfoldment of this freedom are injurious, and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. Those institutions should be encouraged by which men advance in the path of freedom.[1]

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., V, pp.141-142.

This is probably the most important statement, for his political thought, that Vivekananda made on the idea of freedom, and it should be closely examined. The development of the argument is significant for it indicates the way in which Vivekananda's thought processes often worked. His first definition of liberty would find acceptance among both Brahmos and Western liberals of his time: "Our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence or wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others..." This liberty, he says, belongs to the "millions," and no excuse may be found for its deprivation in the interests of an "omniscient" few. Liberty of opportunity for all becomes Vivekananda's first demand. And, on this point, he is at one with Keshub; but at this point, he goes beyond into regions which the Brahmos had not explored. It is the last paragraph that contains the crux of his development, illustrating, as it does, how his mind easily assimilated a Western idea to a traditional Indian concept, yet was perfectly aware of the distinction between the two. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this mental transition occurs with the shift in usage from "liberty" which has more of a Western flavour, to "freedom" which, for Vivekananda, at least, was always the broader term, inclusive of all types of liberty as well as of spiritual freedom. Until the beginning of the last paragraph, the word "liberty" is used

four times and "freedom" not at all; in the final paragraph, "freedom" is mentioned three times and liberty not once. This paragraph is significantly begun with a Sanskrit śloka, and then moves on to the crucial correspondence between "freedom in all matters" and "advance towards Mukti." This correspondence is then underwritten and spelled out with the assertion "To advance oneself towards freedom, physical, mental and spiritual and help others to do so is the supreme prize of man."

At our backs we must always hear, in considering Vivekananda's thought, his words, "To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root and branch reform. Where we differ is in the method."[1] Vivekananda was no less a champion of social, religious, and intellectual liberty than the Brahmos.

> Liberty of thought and action, [he asserted] is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being. Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go down. Caste or no caste, creed or no creed, any man, or class, or caste, or nation, or institution which bars the power of free thought and action of an individual — even so long as that power does not injure others — is devilish and must go down."[2]

But Vivekananda's method, unlike that of, say, Ranade or Gokhale, and to a far greater extent than Rammohun or Keshub,

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., III, p.213.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., V, p.29.

involved a serious attempt at assimilation of traditional Indian concepts. It was with this method, believing in reform but insisting in a natural evolution, that he turned to a consideration of the idea of freedom and eventually adopted it as the dominant concept of his thought. "There is one wonderful phenomenon," he said, "connected with our lives, without which 'who will be able to live, who will be able to enjoy life a moment?' — the idea of freedom. This is the idea that guides each footstep of ours, makes our movements possible, determines our relations to each other — nay, is the very warp and woof in the fabric of human life."[1]

In a broad sense, Vivekananda has often been rightly called a great inspiration of the Indian nationalist movement, as well as of the leading political thinkers of modern India. He may also be seen, in a more particular sense, as the pivotal influence behind one theme of modern Indian political thought, the idea of freedom.

Equality and Harmony

The two concepts of equality and harmony are closely related, in Vivekananda's thought, in several respects: they rest, first, on a common basis, Vivekananda's ideas of the nature of man and of the Absolute; they confront, second,

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., IV, pp.254-55.

a common problem, the reconciliation of an extreme form of individualism with a consideration for the well-being of society; and, finally, they pose a similar solution, Self-realisation. At first glance, the problem of reconciling Vivekananda's radical individualism with his equal emphasis upon the value of social harmony may seem impossible. On the one hand, he believes that, "Each one has a special nature peculiar to himself, which he must follow and through which he will find his way to freedom."[1] "I am the end, my own Self, and nothing else.... Realising my own nature is the one goal of my life."[2] On the other hand, it is precisely Self-realisation that leads to social harmony, for "Individuality in universality is the plan of creation ... man is individual and at the same time universal. It is while realizing our individual nature that we realise even our national and universal nature."[3]

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., II, p.99.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., V, pp.252-53.
3. Vivekananda, op.cit., VI, p.121.

The basis of this way of thinking about freedom and harmony has its roots in the classical Indian conception.

> The route to superior control [writes Karl Potter] to the fourth and most worthwhile kind of attitude, moksa or complete freedom, lies in the mastery of attitude of greater and greater concern coupled with less and less attachment or possessiveness. In fact, the fourth orientation is well understood by extrapolating from this route. In moving from artha to kama, we move from lack of concern to concern, from more attachment to less. Moksa or freedom is the perfection of this growth. When one attains freedom, he is both not at the mercy of what is not himself, that is to say, he is free from restrictions initiated by the not-self, and he is also free to anticipate and control anything to which he turns his efforts, since the whole world is considered as himself in this orientation. The freedom-from corresponds to his lack of attachment, and the freedom-to to his universal concern.[1]

The significance of this way of thinking for Vivekananda's political thought is that it served as a conceptual framework within which he considered the problems of modern India. The radically new orientation which he gave to the classical outlook is manifest in his development of the ideas of equality and harmony, or what Potter would call his use of "freedom-to," his "universal concern" for the social well being.

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1. Potter, op.cit., p.10.

If there is a distinction in Vivekananda's thought between these two concepts of harmony and equality, it rests with the direction he gives each of them: his ideas on equality generally concern Indian society, and his theory of harmony is most often addressed to the world at large. This is not an air-tight distinction which he himself draws; it rather indicates degrees of emphasis. The method which Vivekananda employs, in his approach to these two concepts, is, once again, the formation of correspondences between Vedanta theories on the identity of man with the Absolute and social and political ideas largely inspired by the West. His development of the idea of equality is a notable example of this approach. The concept of political and social equality, it has been suggested above, is foreign to the Indian tradition; by the end of the nineteenth century, however, the Western impact had induced a widespread acceptance of the value among Indian reformers. Vivekananda acknowledges the Western development of this idea, but insists that his own inspiration came from Ramakrishna. Reformers, he argues, often "talk about equality," but only one great teacher of modern India "was able to carry theory into practice." An incident is then related of Ramakrishna's devoted service to Pariahs, exemplifying an utter disregard of caste.[1] Yet, once again, the crucial aspect of this

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., IV, pp.174-5.

development occurs with Vivekananda's interpretation of his guru's example: Ramakrishna, himself, exalts not equality, but compassion, in his gospel of service; it is only with Vivekananda, who is consciously seeking a reply to the West, that "equality" emerges as a word of common usage.

Vivekananda's fullest statement on the idea of equality appears in an essay significantly entitled "Vedanta and Privilege." The argument begins along familiar lines: a correspondence is first drawn among the ideas of man, the Absolute, and spiritual freedom. "The theory of the Vedanta," he says, "comes to this, that you and I and everything in the universe are that Absolute, not parts, but the whole. You are the whole of that Absolute, and so are all others, because the idea of part cannot come into it. These divisions, the limitations, are only apparent, not in the thing itself ... thus the end and aim of this philosophy is to let us know that we have been free always, and shall remain free forever."[1] Spiritual freedom, then, consists of an awareness of divinity in all men, which immediately destroys false notions of "divisions" and "limitations". The argument now moves on to its main consideration, equality; its most notable aspect is the quick correspondence drawn between the spiritual oneness of mankind and the idea of social

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., I, p.419.

equality.[1]

> Man manifests knowledge, discovers it within himself, which is pre-existing through eternity. Everyone is the embodiment of Knowledge, everyone is the embodiment of eternal Bliss, and eternal Existence. The ethical effect is just the same, as we have seen elsewhere, with regard to equality.
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> But the idea of privilege is the bane of human life. Two forces, as it were, are constantly at work, one making caste, and the other breaking caste; in other words, the one making for privilege, the other breaking down privilege. And whenever privilege is broken down, more and more light and progress come to a race. This struggle we see all around us. Of course there is first the brutal idea of privilege, that of the strong over the weak. There is the privilege of wealth. If a man has more money than another, he wants a little privilege over those who have less. There is the still subtler and more powerful privilege of intellect; because one man knows more than others, he claims more privilege. And the last of all, and the worst, because the most tyrannical, is the privilege of spirituality. If some persons think they know more of spirituality, of God, they claim a superior privilege over

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1. R.S. Sharma, in his article, "Historiography of the Ancient Indian Social Order," cites numerous attempts of Indian historians to read Western ideas on social reform into classical Indian texts, and observes that the "specious argument of equality in spiritual rights, irrespective of sex and caste considerations is advanced to meet the demand for equality in material rights." (In Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, edited by C.H. Philips) p.111. It would not be fair to attribute this argument to Vivekananda, for he was well aware that spiritual equality had not resulted, either in traditional or modern India in social or political equality. Vivekananda acknowledges that the latter idea was developed in the West but argues that it is in conformity with the spirit of Indian tradition (as exemplified, for example, in the lives of some of its great saints) and thus demands acceptance among the whole of society.

> everyone else. They say, 'Come down and worship us, ye common herds; we are the messengers of God, and you have to worship us.' None can be Vedantists, and at the same time admit of privilege to anyone, either mental, physical, or spiritual; absolutely no privilege for anyone. The same power is in every man, the one manifesting more, the other less; the same potentiality is in everyone. Where is the claim to privilege? All knowledge is in every soul, even in the most ignorant: he has not manifested it, but, perhaps, he has not had the opportunity, the environments were not, perhaps, suitable to him. When he gets the opportunity, he will manifest it. The idea that one man is born superior to another has no meaning in the Vedanta; ... The work of the Advaita, therefore, is to break down all these privileges. It is the hardest work of all, and curious to say, it has been less active than anywhere else in the land of its birth. If there is any land of privilege, it is the land which gave birth to this philosophy — privilege for the spiritual man as well as for the man of birth.[1]

Vivekananda concludes the essay with a summing up of the points with which he had begun: the quest for spiritual freedom demands realisation of the equality of all men; worship of the idol of inequality only ensnares men in bondage. And it is this bondage in which the orthodox brahmans, as well as the low castes, of modern India are trapped.

> If I asked one of our priests in India, 'Do you believe in Vedanta?' — he says, 'That is my religion; I certainly do; that is my life.' 'Very well, do you admit the equality of all life, the sameness of everything?' 'Certainly I do.' The next moment, when a low caste man approaches this priest, he jumps to one side

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., I, pp.422-424.

> of the street to avoid that man. 'Why do you jump?' 'Because his very touch would have polluted me.' 'But you were just saying we are all the same, and you admit there is no difference in souls.' He says, 'Oh, that is in theory only for householders; when I go into a forest, then I look upon everyone as the same.'
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> Thus, [Vivekananda concludes] trampling on every privilege and everything in us that works for privilege, let us work for that knowledge which will bring the feeling of sameness towards all mankind. You think that because you talk a little more polished language you are superior to the man on the street. Remember that when you are thinking this, you are not going towards freedom, but are forging a fresh chain for your feet. ... That wonderful state of equality, that sameness. This is what is called in Vedanta attaining to freedom. The sign of approaching that freedom is more and more of this sameness and equality.[1]

When the problem of practical measures for the realisation of freedom and equality was posed to Vivekananda, he stressed, like his more Westernised counterparts in reform, the matchless benefits of education. Unlike them, though, he insisted that the highest goals which education may promote are spiritual in nature, in that it helps to uncover the reality of the individual Self.

> Men must have education. They speak of democracy, of the equality of all men, these days. But how will a man know he is equal with all? He must have a strong brain, a clear mind free of nonsensical ideas; he must pierce through the mass of superstitions encrusting his mind to the pure truth that is in his inmost Self. Then he will know that

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1. Ibid., pp.427, 429.

> all perfections, all powers, are already within himself, that these have not to be given him by others. When he realises this, he becomes free that moment, he achieves equality. He also realises that every one else is equally as perfect as he, and he does not have to exercise any power, physical, mental or moral, over his brother men. He abandons the idea that there was ever any man who was lower than himself. Then he can talk of equality; not until then.[1]

No one confronted the idea of harmony, in the eyes of Vivekananda, with greater wisdom than Ramakrishna; and the latter's teaching that "With sincerity and earnestness one can realise God through all religions,"[2] is often repeated by his disciple. It is in this spirit, that Vivekananda develops, from the Vedanta, his belief in the oneness of humanity.

> The second idea [Vivekananda says] that I learned from my Master [the first being that "religion consists in realisation"] and which is perhaps the most vital is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory nor antagonistic. They are but various phases of one eternal religion.
>
> To learn this central secret that the truth may be one and yet many at the same time, that we may have different visions of the same truth from different standpoints, is exactly what must be done. Then, instead of antagonism to any one, we shall have infinite sympathy with all.
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> Just as nature is unity in variety — and infinite variation in the phenomenal, that in and through all these variations of the phenomenal runs the Infinite, the Unchangeable,

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., VIII, p.94.
2. Ramakrishna, op.cit., p.162.

> the Absolute Unity — so it is with every man; the microcosm is but a miniature repetition of the macrocosm; in spite of all these variations, in and through them all runs this eternal harmony, and we have to recognise this. This idea, above all other ideas, I find to be the crying necessity of the day.[1]

Then characteristically, Vivekananda applies this traditional tenet to the ideal of international co-operation and harmony drawing conclusions which Ramakrishna would perhaps have accepted, but never himself taught or even imagined. It is the idea of the "solidarity of the universe," Vivekananda says, "which the world is waiting to receive from our Upanishads."

> Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no more be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organisation, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows the solidarity.[2]

This argument illustrates, again, two aspects of Vivekananda's thought which he saw not as contradictory but complementary: his claim for the uniqueness of Indian wisdom, which strengthened his appeal to the Indian nationalists, is combined with a forceful advocacy of international solidarity. Once again, this may be seen in the light of his ideas on evolution: the harmony of mankind is the highest stage, and

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., IV, pp.180-81.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., III, p.241.

logical consequence, of an increasing Self-realisation by individuals within society; only ignorance inhibits man's natural growth toward freedom and thus harmony. "Ideas of the family brother, the caste brother, the national brother: all these are barriers to the realisation of Vedanta."[1] The fact that Vivekananda's thought inspired forms of extreme Indian nationalism is understandable; but nationalism, for Vivekananda, is an incomplete stage of development. "There is but one basis of well-being," he said, "social, political or spiritual — to know that I and my brother are one. This is true for all countries and all people."[2]

The idea of freedom emerged in nineteenth-century India; it dominated the political thought of the twentieth century. In one sense, this appears only natural, for India during much of this time was engaged in a serious struggle for independence; and, for many of the Indian nationalists, freedom meant no more than termination of foreign rule. Among India's leading thinkers, however, a philosophy of freedom was developed that affirmed, on the one hand, the goal of political independence, but insisted, on the other, that independence, of itself, was incomplete: that it must be fulfilled through a realisation, by each individual, of moral and spiritual freedom. In this way,

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., VIII, p.139.
2. Ibid., p.350.

they believed, freedom would assume new meaning in the discovery of a natural correspondence with equality and harmony. Their attempt must be seen as part of a response to the Western political and social ideals of liberty and equality: these values were thought desirable but not, in themselves, sufficient. The task which Vivekananda inspired and later Indian thinkers pursued, became, above all, one of completion: the bringing to fruition of both traditional Indian and modern Western values by using one ethic to complement the other. The end result they envisioned as a harmony of political, social, and spiritual ideals.

In the development of this philosophy Vivekananda played the most significant role of any nineteenth-century Indian thinker. His search for a melody among the discordant notes of his century was representative, rather than unique. His singular achievement rests with the thematic rhythm he introduced, which resounded in the ideas of Aurobindo, Gandhi, and Tagore.

CHAPTER IV

AUROBINDO GHOSE : INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND SOCIAL HARMONY

Freedom and Nationalism: the Early Ideas of Aurobindo

> Indian patriotism as it just now prevails in the country [wrote Bipin Chandra Pal early in this century] is, I am afraid, a rather mixed cargo. There is great confusion in the origin and intention of this noble aspiration. The one thing that is common, if not literally universal, in the composition of this patriotism, is a deep and burning sense of wrong against the present foreign Government over us. Beyond this, it is very difficult to say if there is any deep and honest unity of aim and ideal in the very large and increasing body of our political minded classes.
>
> But though this mentality may help us to destroy the present order, it will not secure our freedom, even if we get rid of the present servitude. This is not the kind of intellectual and moral materials with which we may undertake real Nation-building. This mentality may enthuse us to destroy what is, but it will not enable us to construct that which ought to be.[1]

As the Indian nationalist movement gained momentum at the turn of the twentieth century, the "burning sense of wrong against the present foreign Government," to which Pal refers, increased and pervaded the political thinking of the period. The roots of this attitude lay deep in nineteenth-century Indian thought: Vivekananda may have publicly deplored any attempts to use his ideas for political purposes, but his personal correspondence shows that he was

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1. Bipin Chandra Pal, Swaraj, The Goal and The Way (Madras: Upendra, 1921) pp.45-46.

fully aware of the political implications of his teaching.[1] His emphasis upon a philosophy of action and strength, his glorification of the Indian past and of Indian character, indicates not only the source of his appeal for later generations, but also a certain tension that occurred within his own thought and personality. In general, Vivekananda felt this tension as did B.C. Pal: as a struggle between the mentality of "destroying what is" and "constructing that which ought to be." If, with Vivekananda, this tension remained latent, blurred by his dissociation from politics, then with Aurobindo, it became open and intense as a consequence of his deep involvement in the nationalist struggle. One argument of this chapter will be that this tension was only resolved, for Aurobindo, after his retirement from active politics. The first phase of his political thought, extending from 1893 to 1910, dealt with an immediate liquidation of British rule. In the second phase, which lasted until his death in 1950, he became committed to the task of constructing a political philosophy revolving around the corresponding concepts of individual freedom and social harmony. Aurobindo's later thought will be seen, here, as the more valuable for a study of political philosophy, not, of course, because creative political thinking necessarily demands dissociation from direct political action. The

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1. Vivekananda, op.cit., VII, p.281; VIII, pp.475-8.

judgement rests rather on the particular experience of Aurobindo who, unlike Gandhi, reached the summit of his capacity as a thinker only after his withdrawal from political activity.

The continuing concern of this chapter will be with the growth of Aurobindo as a political thinker. The description of this growth will focus upon the development of his thinking on the idea of freedom; a development shown in the changing relationship that the idea of freedom underwent, in his thought, with the concepts of nationalism and social harmony. The idea of nationalism dominated Aurobindo's thought during his early phase; nationalism was the weapon with which he attacked the British Raj. Yet, even in his early stage, he had begun to see that, in Pal's words, "though this mentality may help us to destroy the present order it will not secure our freedom, even if we get rid of the present servitude"; and this realisation eventually led to a reassessment of his thinking on the nature of freedom.

Aurobindo returned to India in February 1893; he had spent over fourteen years of his youth in England and had achieved a brilliant academic record at Cambridge in European

classical studies.[1] He decided to devote himself to the cause of Indian independence while still at Cambridge, and it was this commitment, he says, that dissuaded him from joining the Indian Civil Service. Thus, he deliberately failed the riding test, after satisfying all other qualifications, that he might escape the "bondage" of government service.[2] Immediately upon his arrival in India, Aurobindo became politically involved through the publication, in the Anglo-Marathi paper Indu Prakash, of his series of articles entitled "New Lamps for Old". The title, Aurobindo says, "was intended to imply the offering of new lights to replace the old and faint reformist lights of the Congress."[3] This description, though, hardly captures the vituperative tone of Aurobindo's indictment:

> I say, of the Congress, then, this, — that its aims are mistaken, that the spirit in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not a spirit of sincerity and wholeheartedness, and that the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders in whom it trusts, not the right sort of men to be leaders; — in brief, that we are at present the blind led, if not by the blind, at any rate by the one-eyed.[4]

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1. A.B.Purani, The Life of Sri Aurobindo (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1960) pp.8, 27, 41.
2. Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1953) pp.12-13.
3. Ibid., p.27.
4. Aurobindo, "New Lamps For Old", 28 August 1893, in Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo's Political Thought (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958) p.75.

Aurobindo's articles appear to have so shocked Ranade and other Congress moderates that they persuaded the publisher to adopt a subdued tone; this disappointed Aurobindo and he soon abandoned the series.[1]

"New Lamps for Old" and several later writings were published anonymously since Aurobindo preferred to remain discreetly in the background as an academic at Baroda College. In 1906, however, following the partition of Bengal, he moved to Calcutta and immediately seized a position of leadership among the extremist elements of the nationalist movement. One of his first moves, in Calcutta, was to join with B.C. Pal in the co-editorship of the English weekly Bande Mataram.[2] The aim of the paper was to formulate and forcefully present a philosophy of nationalism. The impact of Bande Mataram on the movement was dramatic and effective; Aurobindo believed it "almost unique in journalistic history in the influence it exercised in converting the mind of the people and preparing it for revolution."[3] Through this publication both Pal and Aurobindo sought to assert their roles as the philosophers of the Indian nationalist movement: to underpin the struggle with a broad rationale based mainly on the mystique of nationalism.

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1. Aurobindo, On Himself, p.27.
2. Karan Singh, Prophet of Indian Nationalism, A Study of the Political Thought of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh 1893-1910 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963) pp.46, 62-64.
3. Aurobindo, On Himself, p.54.

These writings never attain the level of Aurobindo's later works; but they do represent the most accomplished political thinking of that period. It was in this role, as political thinkers, that Aurobindo and Pal each saw himself and the other; and they occasionally distinguished their contribution from that of other nationalist leaders. Aurobindo, for example, had a profound respect for Bal Gangadhar Tilak as a political leader; but Aurobindo was also quick to observe that Tilak's role was not that of a political thinker.[1] B.C. Pal, on the other hand, was, for Aurobindo, "perhaps the best and most original political thinker in the country."[2] The nature of Pal's and Aurobindo's contributions to the philosophy of the Indian nationalist movement was manifold, but some understanding of it may be gained through an analysis of the two themes which dominated their political thought in this early phase: the concepts of nationalism and freedom. This analysis will examine these ideas as Aurobindo and Pal set them forth, and also consider their relation to Vivekananda's thought.

Not only the central assumptions but also the basic approach of Aurobindo's and Pal's early political thought are those of nineteenth-century Indian thinkers. They are adapted, though, to meet the changing tempo of the nationalist

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1. Aurobindo, Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda, p.34.
2. Aurobindo, On Himself, p.52.

movement. Foremost among these changes was the growth of the idea of nationalism itself. A key enterprise of nineteenth-century Indian thinkers, it has been observed, involved the use of their tradition to underwrite and assimilate Western values often quite foreign to that tradition. At the turn of the twentieth century, the idea of nationalism began to dominate the political thinking of the Indian independence movement. This idea was imported from the West,[1] but it quickly became absorbed into the political, social, and religious thinking of the period.

With Pal and Aurobindo, nationalism not only became Indianised: it emerged as one of India's religious faiths. "Behind the new nationalism in India," said Pal, "stands the old Vedantism of the Hindus."[2] No Indian thinker stated the relation of nationalism to religion in stronger terms than Aurobindo:

> The new religion of Nationalism is a creed indeed, a faith which already numbers its martyrs, which speaks through inspired voices, which looks beyond the present to a future promised by God, which seeks converts and makes them by the thousand because a blessing is upon it, a mission before it, a mighty ideal ennobles its utterance, a mighty courage pushes it into the battlefield. If there is to be a creed, this is the only possible creed for India.[3]

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1. Stephen Hay in deBary, op.cit., pp.660-61.
2. Bipin Chandra Pal, The Spirit of Indian Nationalism (London: Hind Nationalist Agency, 1910) p.38.
3. Aurobindo, "The Creed and The People," in Bande Mataram, Weekly Edition, 19 April 1908, quoted in Mukherjee, op.cit., p.183.

On the occasion of his famous Uttarpara speech, when Aurobindo believed himself to be voicing the ideas of God, his closing words were these:

> I spoke once before with this force in me and I said then that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the Sanatan Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatan Dharma, with it it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatan Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatan Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatan Dharma it would perish. The Sanatan Dharma, that is nationalism.[1]

This illustrates the remarkable position that the idea of nationalism had attained by 1909, the date of the Uttarpara speech. The rapidity with which the concept developed among the extremists is striking; but germs of this idea had appeared in late nineteenth-century India. Vivekananda had argued, at the close of that century, "... each nation has its own part to play, and naturally, each nation has its own peculiarity and individuality, with which it is born."[2] Vivekananda's purpose, in speaking of the nation in this light, was to claim for India a unique gift of spirituality. On his return from America to India, he commented with satisfaction on the reception that he, as a sannyasin, had

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1. Aurobindo, Speeches, p.66. Sanatan Dharma means "the Eternal Religion".
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., III, p.148.

received from his people: "... it proved the assertion which I have made again and again in the past, that as each nation has one ideal as its vitality, as each nation has one particular groove which is to become its own, so religion is the peculiarity of the growth of the Indian mind."[1] It is in this sense that Vivekananda used freely the word nation: as a people endowed with special qualities which often distinguished them from other nations, and, in the case of India, endowed them with a peculiar mission to fulfill. As a source of inspiration for the later development of nationalism, Vivekananda's ideas were undoubtedly of critical importance. There are, however, significant elements which appear in Pal's or Aurobindo's conception of nationalism that are foreign to Vivekananda's thought. First, the idea of nationalism as a religion, or of the nation as a spiritual entity standing apart from its individual members, is a decided innovation. "What are nations," Vivekananda often asked, "but multiplied individuals?"[2] Second, Vivekananda, unlike many of his later admirers, exalted the idea of harmony among all nations, regardless of their differences. "Each nation has a mission of its own," Vivekananda said: but it was a mission "to perform in this harmony of races."[3]

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1. Ibid., p.203.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., II, p.371.
3. Ibid., p.371.

This idealisation of harmony runs throughout the early writings of Pal and Aurobindo; but, in the heat of the struggle for independence, it was always overshadowed by the deva of Nationalism. It did not recover its old force until after Aurobindo's retirement from politics, when he developed it into a central concept of his mature political philosophy.[1] Finally, it is notable that the word "nationalism" does not appear in the works of Vivekananda; and this in itself indicates that the idea, as a political concept, had not advanced far in his thought. With the widespread use of the term, especially in Pal and Aurobindo, associations rapidly grew around it; and select aspects of Vivekananda's thought were assimilated into the gospel of nationalism as easily as Vivekananda had himself absorbed, into his thought, select elements of the ancient Indian tradition. By 1910, Pal could write in his The Spirit of Indian Nationalism of the advent of "Neo-Vedantism"; of its close affinity with nationalism and its indebtedness to Swami Vivekananda.[2]

Nevertheless, the impetus which Pal and Aurobindo

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1. It is noteworthy that B.C. Pal, too, in his later phase placed increasing emphasis upon the goal of international harmony. This was seen by many as a betrayal of his former firm commitment to nationalism; it may also be seen, though, as a development of elements which had always been present in his thought, but had received less attention in his earlier phase.
2. B.C. Pal, The Spirit of Indian Nationalism, p.40.

gave to a narrow form of Indian nationalism does represent a notable departure from Vivekananda's emphasis on universal harmony — a harmony of nations, as well as of races, and religions. Their commitment to this form of nationalism, moreover, drove them to another equally significant departure from Vivekananda's position. Freedom became inseparably connected in their thought with the idea of the Nation; and they saw freedom in terms of national liberation, rather than as an individual achievement of self-realisation. Vivekananda had desired India's ultimate Independence; but he did not believe that national freedom was in itself sufficient, or that by itself it could lead to a solution of India's pressing social problems. This, he insisted, would not come simply through a change in government, but rather through a transformation of moral attitudes; or, to put it in the traditional language which he preferred, through a quest, by each individual, for not mere political liberty, but moral and spiritual freedom. Once again, this was the position which Aurobindo eventually adopted, not as a result of a sudden shift of direction, but rather through a gradual evolution of his thinking on freedom. An analysis of the course of his development may begin with a consideration of the modern Indian conception of swaraj, the term that was then commonly used, especially by thinkers like Aurobindo, Pal and Tilak, to express in traditional Indian

language their conception of freedom.

The meaning of swaraj is often obscure in recent Indian thinking. At least part of this ambiguity may be explained by the modern Indian attempt to trace the word to its original Sanskrit base, and then reinterpret its ancient meaning for the modern situation. As Pal, Aurobindo, and Tilak often observed, the Sanskrit sva does suggest "own, one's own, my own, or self."[1] Thus sva-rāj (स्वाराज्) as used in the early Vedic texts signified "self-ruling," "self-ruler," one's own rule.[2] The Rig Veda and Atarvaveda used it in this sense, of "self-ruler" and "king."[3] This kingship could be either divine or terrestrial, applying to Indra, "king" of the gods, or, occasionally, in a technical sense, to earthly kings of Western India.[4] Swaraj in the early Vedas, then, had a political meaning, signifying "self-rule," in the sense that a king enjoys sovereignty over his own dominion. In the modern period, B.G. Tilak and others sought to use the term in this political sense.

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1. Sir M. Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary New Edition, Enlarged and Improved (Oxford: Clarendon, 1899) p.1275.
2. Ibid., p.1276. ("Sva" becomes "Swa" with most modern Indian writers.) Svarājya (self-rule) is the San. substantive.
3. A.A. MacDonell and A.B. Keith, Vedic Index of Names and Subjects, (London: John Murray, 1912) II, p.494.
4. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa VIII. 14 in MacDonell and Keith, op.cit., p.494. For complete reference, see Rigveda Brahmanas, The Aitareya and Kausitaki Brahmanas of the Rig-Veda, translated by A.B. Keith, Harvard Oriental Series, 30 Volumes (Cambridge, U.S.A.: Harvard Press, 1920) Vol.25, p.330.

They placed swaraj, of course, in a different historical and ideological context to meet their own needs; but in calling for swaraj they were demanding an independent rule over their own political dominion.

Sva, however, may also mean, in Sanskrit, "self" in the purely spiritual sense of "soul";[1] swaraj in this sense suggests "soul-rule," or one who is governed only by the dictates of his own soul. The use of swaraj in this way need not exclude the political connotation, for a king might also possess "soul-rule"; indeed, he may be thought able to maintain his sovereignty precisely because he does have singular spiritual merits. Swaraj was sometimes used, however, in the classical texts, exclusively in the spiritual sense. A passage which shows this usage occurs in the Chandogya Upanishad:

> 2. Now next, the instruction with regard to the soul (ātma-deśa).—
> The Soul (Ātman), indeed, is below. The Soul is above. The Soul is to the west. The Soul is to the east. The Soul is to the south. The Soul is to the north. The Soul, indeed, is this whole world.
> Verily, he who sees this, who thinks this, who understands this, who has pleasure in the Soul, who has delight in the Soul, who has intercourse with the Soul, who has bliss in the Soul — he is autonomous (sva-rāj); he has unlimited freedom in all worlds. But they who know otherwise than this are heteronomous (anya-rājan); they have perishable worlds; in all worlds they have no freedom.[2]

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1. Monier-Williams, op.cit., p.1275.
2. Chandogya Upanishad, 7.25.2 in Hume, op.cit., p.261.

The full significance of the idea of swaraj for modern Indian political thought may best be seen by tracing its historical evolution through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[1] The contemporary Indian revival of the term occurred with B.G. Tilak and other Maratha writers, at the close of the nineteenth century;[2] these men associated the idea of swaraj with the political career of Sivaji (1627-1680) the Maratha leader who forged the foundation of a Confederation from the disparate sections of Maharastra. Sivaji succeeded in his attempts both through military conquest and a fervid appeal to the common sentiment of his people as a community of Hindus.[3] Swaraj used in association with Sivaji indicated both political liberty and freedom for the spread of the Hindu religion. His goal of swaraj involved, according to one of his biographers, "emancipating all India from Mahomedan thraldom and ... the restoration of liberty of religion for the

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1. Some attention has been given to this problem in S.K. Ghosh, The Influence of Western, Particularly English, Political Ideas on Indian Political Thought, 1885-1919. Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1949, pp.126-35. Ghosh focuses on swaraj as political independence, and distinguishes between those who demanded complete autonomy (the early Tilak, Aurobindo, and Pal), and those who saw swaraj as compatible with continued British Imperial rule (the Congress Moderates).
2. Wolpert, Stanley A., Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India (Los Angeles: Univ. of Calif. 1962) p.80.
3. Percival Spear, India, A Modern History (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Mich. 1961) pp.176-179.

Hindus and a Hindu paramountcy over all India."[1] When Tilak revived the term, along with a whole cult of Sivaji worship and festivals in the late 1890's, he used the word in the sense that it is associated with Sivaji, as political independence and the creation of a Hindu state; originally, though, he confined its application to his own region of Maharastra.[2] Tilak eventually extended this goal to the whole of India, but, although his conception of swaraj admitted of frequent redefinition, it remained a goal of political and religious liberty, or, as he called it, "Home Rule."[3]

Bengali writers at first used the word swaraj strictly in the sense that Tilak had employed it; and this may have arisen from the fact that it was introduced to Bengal by a Maratha publicist, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, in his popular life of Sivaji.[4] It is noteworthy that after almost a century of highly productive political and social thinking in Bengal the word swaraj had to be imported from

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1. N.S. Takakhav, The Life of Shivaji Maharaj (adapted from original Marathi work by K.S. Keluskar) (Bombay: Manoranjan, 1921) p.605.
2. S. Wolpert, op.cit., p.80. It may be noted that Tilak used the term svarajya, which is the Marathi version of the Sanskrit swaraj. (Wolpert, op.cit., p.191).
3. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, His Writings and Speeches (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1918) pp.97-115, 152-53.
4. Karan Singh, op.cit., p.60 and Aurobindo, On Himself p.30. Deuskar was also the author of Desher Katha, an economic analysis of Britain's exploitation of India. Deuskar's family had long resided in Bengal, and his books were written in Bengali.

Maharastra. Vivekananda, for example, who freely incorporated into his English writings and speeches traditional Indian terms for freedom like moksha and mukti never used the term swaraj. Equally significant is the fact that once swaraj became known to Bengalis, it quickly developed into a key concept of their thinking on freedom. This indicates not only the fertility and absorptive powers of Bengali thinkers at that time, but also the strength of their self-conscious attempt to establish continuity with the Indian tradition.

The meaning of swaraj became increasingly associated, in Bengal, with the extremist elements of the nationalist movement. This association was nourished by the frequent appearance of swaraj in the Bengali daily newspaper Sandhya edited by the extremist Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya. He used swaraj in the sense of complete freedom from British rule and, in particular, from the Firinghi (foreigner's) mentality. Swaraj thus meant a psychological liberation from all Western influence as well as the attainment of political independence. Emphasis upon the former aspect of swaraj brought the idea of freedom closer to Vivekananda's conception, but with the outstanding difference that Upadhyaya consistently referred to swaraj as a national goal, pursued through combat with

the Firinghi.[1] It follows from Upadhyaya's position that swaraj would involve practice of swadeshi, the use of products made by "one's own country," and this identification was further developed by B.C. Pal.[2]

At this point, Dadabhai Naoroji attempted to make the term swaraj nationally respectable by giving it a restricted political definition, and then setting it forth as the aim of the entire Congress, Extremists and Moderates as well. In his Presidential Speech to the faction-ridden National Congress of 1906, Dadabhai used the word swaraj for the first time from the Congress rostrum. "We do not ask any favours," he said, "We want only justice. Instead of going into any further divisions or details of our rights as British citizens, the whole matter can be comprised in one word — 'self-government' or Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies."[3]

Dadabhai's address was met with general acclaim, but, as Stanley Wolpert has observed, "Each party in Congress read the patriarch's speech as a vindication of its own platform."[4] Much of the controversy focused on the

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1. See Bengal Native Newspaper Reports, 1906, India Office Library transcripts. Sandhya, 7 and 12 December 1906, pp.1114-1116; 22 November 1906, p.1068; 12 October 1906, p.926; 20 September 1906, p.898. Sandhya is reported here as one of the largest daily newspapers in Bengal, p.591.
2. B.C. Pal, Swadeshi and Swaraj (Calcutta: 1954).
3. Dadabhai Naoroji, Speeches and Writings (Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1910) p.76.
4. S. Wolpert, op.cit., p.194.

reference to "Self-government or Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies." The Moderates, led by Gokhale, were content with the goal of colonial self-government under the aegis of the British Empire; and Gokhale "firmly believed that change could best be effected through cooperation with the government..."[1] The Extremists, led by Tilak, Aurobindo and Pal, argued that neither Gokhale's conception of swaraj nor his method of attaining it were correct, and their response to Dadabhai's speech was to interpret swaraj as complete independence.

> The object of all our political movements [wrote Aurobindo in Bande Mataram] and therefore the sole object with which we advocate passive resistance is Swaraj or national freedom. The latest and most venerable of the older politicians who have sat in the Presidential Chair of the Congress, pronounced from that seat of authority Swaraj as the one object of our political endeavour, — Swaraj as the only remedy for all our ills, — Swaraj as the one demand nothing short of which will satisfy the people of India. Complete self-government as it exists in the United Kingdom or the Colonies, — such was his definition of Swaraj. The Congress has contented itself with demanding self-government as it exists in the Colonies. We of the new school would not pitch our ideal one inch lower than absolute Swaraj, — self-government as it exists in the United Kingdom... We believe that this newly awakened people, when it has gathered its strength together, neither can nor ought to consent to any relations with England less than that of equals in a confederacy. To be content with the relations of master and dependent or superior and subordinate, would be a mean and pitiful

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1. Ibid., p.198.

> aspiration unworthy of manhood; to strive for anything less than a strong and glorious freedom would be to insult the greatness of our past and the magnificent possibilities of our future.[1]

Swaraj for Aurobindo and Pal, as for Tilak,[2] constituted complete independence from Britain; like Tilak, too, Aurobindo and Pal surrounded their political demand with traditional words and overtones that gave it added force. Yet, unlike Tilak, they sought to go beyond a political conception of swaraj; they attempted to expand it into a philosophy of freedom which through its association with Indian traditional thought would distinguish it as theoretically different from the European idea of political liberty.[3]

References to swaraj as an individual spiritual value are scattered throughout Aurobindo's early speeches: "Christ said to the disciples who expected a material kingdom on the spot, 'the kingdom of heaven is within you.' To them too he might say, 'the kingdom of Swaraj is within you.'" The dominant emphasis, however, in Aurobindo's early writings falls not on an individual but on a national quest for swaraj. The passage on swaraj which has just been quoted continues, "Let them win and keep that kingdom of

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1. Aurobindo, The Doctrine of Passive Resistance, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1952) pp.69-70.
2. S. Wolpert, op.cit., p.191.
3. B.C. Pal, The Spirit of Indian Nationalism, pp.45-48.

Swaraj, the sense of the national separateness and individuality, the faith in its greatness and future, the feeling of God within ourselves and in the nation, the determination to devote every thought and action to his service."[1] Aurobindo insisted, like Vivekananda, and unlike Tilak, that freedom or swaraj represented much more than a change in political systems;[2] but unlike Vivekananda, Aurobindo saw in the Nation an entity that possessed its own divinity and its own potential for realising spiritual as well as political freedom. Thus, Vivekananda's distinction between two forms of freedom was applied, in a political sense, primarily to the nation rather than to the individual;[3] and Vivekananda's association of spiritual freedom with Indian civilisation was used to portray the idea of swaraj as a unique quality of the Indian nation.

> The ideal of unqualified Swaraj [wrote Aurobindo] has a charm for the national mind which is irresistible if it is put before it in the national way by minds imbued with Indian feeling and free from the gross taint of Western materialism. Swaraj as a sort of European ideal, political liberty for the sake of political self-assertion, will not awaken India. Swaraj as the fulfilment of the ancient life of India under modern conditions, the return of the Satyayuga of national greatness, the resumption by her of her great role of teacher and guide, self-liberation of the

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1. Aurobindo, Speeches, p.72.
2. Ibid., pp.85-86.
3. Ibid., p.37.

> people for the final fulfilment of the Vedantic ideal in politics, this is the true Swaraj for India.[1]

Perhaps the fullest statement on the meaning of swaraj and of its close relation to Indian nationalism came from B.C. Pal. His conception of spiritual freedom as realisation of the Universal recalled that of Vivekananda, but the correspondence which he drew between this idea and that of nationalism was a development which he shared only with Aurobindo. In his essay "Indian Nationalism: Hindu Standpoint," Pal defined swaraj as "The conscious identification of the individual with the universal." The correct meaning of swaraj, he says, derives not from Dadabhai Naoroji or Sivaji but from the Upanishads. Swaraj "occurs in the Upanishads to indicate the highest spiritual state, where in the individual self stands in conscious union with the Universal or the Supreme Self. When the Self sees and knows whatever is as its own self, it attains svaraj: — so says the Chhandogya Upanishad."[2]

Beginning with this definition of swaraj, Pal expounds a theory of nationalism which sets forth not only, as Aurobindo had, the value of national freedom; it goes on

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1. Aurobindo, "Ideals Face to Face," in Bande Mataram, 3 May 1908, as contained in Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Bande Mataram and Indian Nationalism (1906-1908) (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1957) pp.84-85.
2. B.C. Pal, Writings and Speeches (Calcutta: Vugayatri Prakashak Ltd., 1958) p.77.

to show that the Nation is the one suitable social unit to further the individual's personal quest for spiritual freedom. Thus, whereas Vivekananda had argued the role of society as providing a framework within which the individual achieves realisation, for Pal that function has been pre-empted by the Nation:

> The real value of the ideal of Nationality consists in the fact that it offers a much larger and broader formula of human association than the idea of either the tribe or the race... and thus, by subordinating his individual instincts and interests, tastes and appetites, to the requirements, first of his family, then of his tribe, then of his nation, man finds even his own individual life and interests ennobled and enlarged; and through this very subjection to the authority of these larger corporations, he gradually reaches out to a much fuller and more perfect freedom than what he could ever dream of attaining, amidst the perpetual conflicts and competitions, for even the very barest necessaries of life, of mere individual existence in this world."[1]

This necessary relationship between the Nation and "a more perfect freedom," Pal argues, "demands a fundamental reconsideration of the gospel of human freedom preached by the European Illumination of the eighteenth century. Indeed, the idea of freedom as it has gradually developed in Europe ever since old Paganism was replaced by Christianity with its essentially individualistic ethical implications and emphasis, is hardly in keeping with the new social philosophy

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1. Ibid., pp.73-75.

of our age. Freedom, independence, liberty, are all essentially negative concepts. They all indicate absence of restraint, regulation and subjection."[1] Europe would do well, then, to learn from the Indian conception of freedom, which is not negative but positive: "It does not mean absence of restraint or regulation or dependence, but self-restraint, self-regulation, and self-dependence," and, "the self in Hindu thought, even in the individual, is a synonym for the Universal." In this sense, the highest freedom is "subjection to the Universal," or "the complete identification of the individual with the Universal in every conscious relation of life."[2] Devotion to the ideal of the Nation prepares the individual for his ultimate identification with the Absolute; and Pal sees the Nation as critically necessary not only to the growth of man's freedom but to the very existence of a civilised life. "The enemy of Nationalism is," he says, "a mortal enemy of civilisation."[3]

The Indian philosophy of nationalism reached its apogee in the early political thought of Pal and Aurobindo. It was a philosophy that, in one sense, continued the ideas of Vivekananda by proclaiming the spiritual nature of freedom, as well as of all activity dedicated to the service of India. It departed from Vivekananda's position with

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1. Ibid., p.75.
2. Ibid., p.76.
3. Ibid., pp.81-82.

the emphasis it placed upon national freedom, and the sacred nature of political service for the sake of the Nation. Vivekananda has exalted the individual, as a spiritual being, beyond all other considerations. He envisioned a stateless society of free individuals. And he prized, above all, the ideal of freedom with harmony; of a society of individuals where conflict and competition were supplanted by a common realisation of the unity of mankind. Each of these positions Aurobindo had partially accepted before his withdrawal from politics; with each, however, he had some serious reservations, emerging mostly from his commitment to nationalism. Yet, by 1915, Aurobindo was at one with Vivekananda on all of these fundamentals, and had begun their development into a political philosophy which exalted the twin ideals of, not Indian Independence and nationalism, but individual freedom and social harmony. An understanding of this transformation of Aurobindo's thought may begin by examining his writings in the months immediately before and after his imprisonment in the Alipore Conspiracy Case of 1908-1909; for the events surrounding this confinement had a profound effect on his thinking and appear to have precipitated his decision to withdraw from active political life.

After Aurobindo's decisive move to Calcutta in 1906, his revolutionary activities, both as a polemicist, and a

party organizer mushroomed. Aurobindo relates that it was he who, in 1906, "persuaded this [Extremist party] group in Bengal to take public position as a party, proclaim Tilak as their leader and enter into a contest with the Moderate leaders for the control of the Congress and of public opinion and action in the country."[1] Moreover, when Pal's co-editorship of Bande Mataram ceased in December 1906, Aurobindo became the mind behind that operation.[2] As the year 1907 progressed, relations with the Indian government worsened, and the breach between the Moderates and the Extremists, which Dadabhai had only temporarily mollified, grew wider. Aurobindo did everything possible to exacerbate the situation. To provoke the Government, he published his series of articles in April issues of Bande Mataram on "Passive Resistance." Violence on the part of the Government, he urged, must be returned with violence. The Moderates' approach was categorically rejected: "Petitioning, which we have so long followed, we reject as impossible — the dream of a timid inexperience, the teaching of false friends who hope to keep us in perpetual subjection, foolish to reason, false to experience."[3] As the explosive Surat Congress of December 1907, approached, Aurobindo whipped the Extremist faction into vigilance, insisting,

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1. Aurobindo, On Himself, p.76.
2. Ibid., p.72.
3. Aurobindo, The Doctrine of Passive Resistance, p.70.

repeatedly, that a moment of crisis was near. On 1 December 1907, he wrote in Bande Mataram under "The New Faith":

> The bureaucracy will not have to reckon this time with a few self-styled leaders who are only too eager to fall down and worship the idol of the hour, but with a newly-awakened people to whom the political freedom of the country has been elevated to the height of a religious faith. ... The political strife has assumed a religious character, and the question now before the people is whether India — the India of the holy Rishis, the India that gave birth to a Rama, a Krishna and a Buddha, the India of Sivaji and Guru Gobinda — is destined forever to lie prostrate at the proud feet of a conqueror.[1]

Aurobindo has himself testified to the leading role which he played in provoking the Surat split, and the subsequent Extremists' secession from the Congress.[2] Yet, this was not enough; he relentlessly carried on his agitation throughout the spring of 1908. In early May, Aurobindo wrote for Bande Mataram under the title "The Morality of Boycott":

> The sword of the warrior is as necessary to the fulfilment of justice and righteousness as the holiness of the saint. Ramdas is not complete without Shivaji. To maintain justice and prevent the strong from despoiling, and the weak from being oppressed, is the function for which the Kshatriya was created. 'Therefore,' says Sri Krishna in the Mahabharata, 'God created battle and armour, the sword, the bow and the dagger.'[3]

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1. Aurobindo, Bande Mataram, 1 December 1907, contained in Mukherjee, Bande Mataram and Indian Nationalism, pp.55-56.
2. Aurobindo, On Himself, pp.79-80.
3. Aurobindo, Doctrine of Passive Resistance, p.88.

But "The Morality of Boycott" was never published: it became instead an exhibit in the Alipore Conspiracy Case. On 4 May 1908, Aurobindo was arrested and later tried for sedition. One year later he was acquitted; but during that year he underwent, in prison, a spiritual experience which, he says, ultimately determined his withdrawal from politics. In prison, alone in "solitary meditation," "hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda" and feeling his presence,[1] Aurobindo felt that he had finally realized the deepest meaning of Hinduism.

> What happened to me during that period [he said in his Uttarpara Speech shortly after his release] I am not impelled to say, but only this that day after day, He showed me His wonders and made me realise the utter truth of the Hindu religion. I had had many doubts before. I was brought up in England amongst foreign ideas and an atmosphere entirely foreign. About many things in Hinduism I had once been inclined to believe that they were imaginations, that there was much of dream in it, much that was delusion and Maya. But now day after day I realised in the mind, I realised in the heart, I realised in the body the truths of the Hindu religion. They became living experiences to me, and things were opened to me which no material science could explain.[2]

One need not believe in mystical experiences to appreciate the change in Aurobindo's outlook after his imprisonment. Bande Mataram had been terminated following

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1. Aurobindo, On Himself, p.115.
2. Aurobindo, Speeches, p.61.

his arrest; thus, on 19 June 1909, a month after his release, he began a new paper, significantly entitled The Karmayogin. This weekly lasted under his editorship less than eight months, but even in this short time signs of his growing maturity as a social and political thinker began to appear. The stated policy of the paper was to deal with "political and social problems ... seeking first their spiritual roots and inner causes and then proceding to measures and remedies."[1] This search for "spiritual roots" had long preoccupied Aurobindo, and its appearance, once again, represents nothing novel. What has virtually disappeared, though, is Aurobindo's occupation with political strategy, and the elevation of political success to the exclusion of ethical considerations. The determined effort in the series on "Passive Resistance" to separate morality from politics and to construct a programme of political action purely on standards of expediency no longer concerns him. The belligerent and ruthless tone of that series has been replaced, not by a spirit of conciliation, but rather by a more abstract approach to problems of political and social change. Thus, he wrote in his article "The Ideal of the Karmayogin," "The task we set before ourselves is not mechanical but moral and spiritual. We aim not at the

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1. Aurobindo as quoted in Karan Singh, op.cit., p.141.

alteration of a form of government but at the building up of a nation. Of that task politics is a part, but only a part."[1] Moreover, for the first time in Aurobindo's writings the gospel of Indian Nationalism is questioned:

> It [Nationalism] has helped itself with the intellect, rejoicing in its own lightness, clearness, accuracy, shrewd insight, but it has not been sufficiently supported by inspired wisdom. It has attached itself to imaginations and idealisms, but has not learned to discern the deeper Truth and study the will of God. It has been driven by ardent and vehement emotions, but was defective in clear will-power and the pure energy that is greater and more impetuous than any passionate feeling. Either Nationalism will purify itself, learn a more sacred truth and command a diviner impulse, or it will have to abandon utterly its old body and get itself a new.[2]

The Doctrine of Passive Resistance had declared, "we recognise ... no method or action as politically good or evil except as it truly helps or hinders our progress for its national emancipation."[3] In The Karmayogin, however, Aurobindo said, "Our means must be as great as our ends,"[4] and an inner spiritual realisation of swaraj became the prerequisite for political achievement. "For it is in the spirit that strength is eternal and you must win back the kingdom of yourselves, the inner Swaraj, before you can win back your outer empire. ... Recover the source of all

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1. Sri Aurobindo, The Ideal of The Karmayogin (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1950) pp.2-3.
2. Ibid., p.22.
3. Aurobindo, Doctrine of Passive Resistance, pp.67-68.
4. Aurobindo, The Ideal of the Karmayogin, p.5.

strength in yourselves and all else will be added to you, social soundness, intellectual pre-eminence, political freedom..."[1]

The most significant entry that appeared in The Karmayogin concerned Aurobindo's thoughts on freedom. This statement, which was quoted extensively in the first chapter, set forth, it will be recalled, a distinction between "internal" and "external" freedom, looking to the West as a guide to the latter. "We in India," Aurobindo said, "have found a mighty freedom within ourselves, our brother-men in Europe have worked towards freedom without. We have been moving on parallel lines towards the same end. They have found out the way to external freedom. We have found out the way to internal freedom. We meet and give to each other what we have gained." This passage indicates the extent to which Aurobindo's thinking on freedom had developed before his retirement from politics; it suggests that the direction which it was to take at Pondicherry — a path of harmony rather than struggle — had been established as early as 1909.

The Karmayogin, then, represents a first indication of Aurobindo's shift in emphasis from a glorification of the nationalist struggle to a search for "some harmonisation"

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1. Ibid., p.9.

of political ideals which is "undoubtedly the immediate future of the human race."[1] As the paper's publication progressed the theme of harmony received growing attention. In words that recall Vivekananda, Aurobindo wrote, "There is discord in life, but mankind yearns for peace and love... this is the essence of humanitarianism, the modern gospel of love for mankind.... it is the nature, the dharma of humanity that it should be unwilling to stand alone. Every man seeks the brotherhood of his fellows and we can only live by fraternity with others. Through all its differences and discords humanity is striving to become one."[2] If Aurobindo had written nothing else after his articles in The Karmayogin his altered approach might be dismissed as an understandable reaction to the threat of deportation by the Government. This would seem plausible, for other victims of arrest, notably Tilak, adopted a more conciliatory tone after return from a prolonged exile. This explanation, however, takes only a partial view of Aurobindo's thought; it overlooks the considerable development which Aurobindo gave to the ideas of individual freedom and universal harmony in the later phase of his philosophy.

According to Aurobindo, the immediate cause of his retirement from politics, was an adesh, or a divine command,

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1. Ibid., p.49.
2. Sri Aurobindo, Speeches, p.96, published in The Karmayogin July-August, 1909.

which directed him to Pondicherry.[1] He reached the French colony on 4 April 1910; four years later, he founded Arya, the monthly periodical that served for the next seven years as the main vehicle of his political and social philosophy. An immediate indication of the full extent of Aurobindo's shift in outlook appears in the language of the first Arya publication. Old terms which he had often used and apparently still associated with the nationalist struggle virtually disappear. He continues to speak of India as a culture endowed with unique spiritual qualities; but seldom does he glorify the Indian Nation, and hardly ever does he refer to the ideal of Nationalism. He writes constantly of freedom, but wholly abandons the word "swaraj". He remains occupied with problems of political and social change, but never uses the phrase "passive resistance" or "boycott". Other words and phrases appear commonly, moreover, which were infrequently used in his early period: "the religion of humanity," "unity in diversity," "internationalism and human unity," "the problem of uniformity and liberty": these are some of the chapter headings of his book, published serially in Arya from 1915 to 1918, entitled The Ideal of Human Unity.

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1. Aurobindo, On Himself, p.96.

The aim of Arya, set forth in an early issue, indicates the dominant note on which Aurobindo's thought had begun to turn:

> The problem of thought is to find out the right idea and the right way of harmony; to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the Self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate, dominate, transfigure the mental and physical life; to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own richness, power and complexity; and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity.[1]

This, then, is the cardinal problem which Aurobindo confronted in his later thought and the theme that pervades his later writing: "the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity." It was a problem that had been considered by Vivekananda. Aurobindo, like Vivekananda, examined the ideas of individual freedom and social harmony against the background of fundamental problems of political philosophy; problems which concern the nature of man, of the Absolute, of the good society, and of the right relation between the individual and society. On each of these

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1. Aurobindo, Ideals and Progress (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1951) p.68 and Purani, op.cit., pp.181-82.

problems the position of Aurobindo, in his later phase, is essentially that which was set forth a generation earlier by Vivekananda; and here one appreciates Romain Rolland's judgement that "Aurobindo was the real intellectual heir of Vivekananda."[1] This inheritance had been received by Aurobindo in Bengal; but it was fully realised only at Pondicherry.

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1. Romain Rolland, Prophets of the New India, trans. E.F. Malcolm-Smith (London: Cassell and Co., 1930) p.499.

CHAPTER V

AUROBINDO ON THE NATURE OF FREEDOM

The most substantial theoretical development of the modern Indian idea of freedom occurs in the political philosophy of Aurobindo. Yet, substantial as his statement may be within the context of recent Indian thought, it may appear quite incomplete when measured against modern European theories of social and political liberty. For Aurobindo is notably unconcerned with certain features of Western thinking on freedom, some of which have been often regarded as essential components of the idea. Aurobindo says little, for example, of the need for the rule of law as a safeguard of civil liberties. He says still less about the desirability of an independent judiciary or legislature, or even of a free opposition to government. And he mentions not at all that freedom concerning the right to possess private property.

The paucity of consideration given to these aspects of freedom, not only by Aurobindo but also by the other members of his school, itself suggests the nature of the interpretation which they placed upon their political and social experience — the experience from which the modern

Indian idea of freedom emerged. The elements of which this idea was not constituted are no less significant, perhaps, than those of which it was; and although this study will confine itself to an analysis of the latter, a recognition of what the Indian idea of freedom was not, as well as what it was, offers insight into the response which the school made to its particular historical experience. One aim of this chapter will be to examine how Aurobindo, in his response, sought to fulfill the common goal shared by his school: the free expression and growth of the individual in society.

The suspicion rightly exists of any political philosophy rooted in the idea of an Absolute, whether in the form of a Nation, Natural Law, or a Divine Truth, that individual freedom may not only be sacrificed before the altar of political unity, but that this sacrifice may be justified on the basis of some supra-rational standard. Belief in an Absolute constitutes a main pillar of Aurobindo's philosophy. The political implications of this belief for an authoritarian ideology are readily discernible in his early thought: in his identification of the Indian Nation with the Absolute. Not only did

love of Nation signify, for him as well as for Pal, devotion to God; it indicated possession of the highest freedom as well. These early ideas of Aurobindo, however, are neither representative of his school, nor are they consistent with his own later development. The ideas which do characterize the school — ideas not absent from Aurobindo's earlier period, but decidedly undeveloped at that time — are those which elevate the individual to a pre-eminent position; the individual exceeding, as Aurobindo later said, "the limits of the family, the clan, the class, the nation."[1] They are ideas which insist that political and social liberties are personal values necessary to human development, to the individual's quest for self-realisation. "Man needs freedom of thought and life and action," wrote Aurobindo in Arya on the theme that was to dominate his later philosophy, "in order that he may grow, otherwise he will remain fixed where he was, a stunted and static being."[2]

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1. Aurobindo, Ideal of Human Unity, in op.cit., p.380.
2. Aurobindo, The Human Cycle, in op.cit., p.284.

Aurobindo saw as a main purpose of his later political thought the support of the widest possible enjoyment of freedom, at every stage of individual and social development. This broad conception of freedom made even more difficult the central problem which he faced: the task of achieving "the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity." His approach rests upon his view of the nature of man and of the Absolute; a view, he says, rooted in "the old Indian discovery that our real 'I' is a Supreme Being which is our true self and which it is our business to discover and consciously become and, secondly, that that Being is one in all, expressed in the individual and the collectivity and only by admitting and realising our unity with others can we entirely fulfill our true self-being."[1] Like Vivekananda, Aurobindo constructed his entire philosophy on this fundamental conception; but more than Vivekananda, he explored its implications for the idea of political and social freedom. This appears

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1. Ibid., p.59. The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity and War and Self-determination first appeared, serially, in Arya, 1915-20. Revised editions appeared later; of The Human Cycle in 1949, and The Ideal of Human Unity in 1950.

most clearly with the attention that Aurobindo gave to the question of the right relation of the individual to society, and, in particular, to the problem of reconciling individual freedom with social and political order. The essence of his approach emerges in the following passage:

> By liberty we mean the freedom to obey the law of our being, to grow to our natural self-fulfilment, to find out naturally and freely our harmony with our environment. The dangers and disadvantages of liberty, the disorder, strife, waste and confusion to which its wrong use leads are indeed obvious. But they arise from the absence or defect of the sense of unity between individual and individual, between community and community, which pushes them to assert themselves at the expense of each other instead of growing by mutual help and interchange and to assert freedom for themselves in the very act of encroaching on the free development of their fellows. If a real, a spiritual and psychological unity were effectuated, liberty would have no perils and disadvantages; for free individuals enamoured of unity would be compelled by themselves, by their own need, to accommodate perfectly their own growth with the growth of their fellows and would not feel themselves complete except in the free growth of others. Because of our present imperfection and the ignorance of our mind and will, law and regimentation have to be called in to restrain and to compel from outside. The facile advantages of a strong law and compulsion are obvious, but equally great are the disadvantages. Such perfection as it succeeds in creating tends to be mechanical and even the order it imposes turns out to be artificial and liable to break down if the yoke is loosened or the restraining grasp withdrawn. Carried too far, an imposed order discourages the principles of natural growth which is the true method of life and may even slay the capacity

> for real growth. We repress and overstandardise life at our peril; by over-regimentation we crush Nature's initiative and habit of intuitive self-adaptation. Dwarfed or robbed of elasticity, the devitalised individuality, even while it seems outwardly fair and symmetrical, perishes from within. Better anarchy than the long continuance of a law which is not our own or which our real nature cannot assimilate. And all repressive or preventive law is only a makeshift, a substitute for the true law which must develop from within and be not a check on liberty, but its outward image and visible expression. Human society progresses really and vitally in proportion as law becomes the child of freedom; it will reach its perfection when, man having learned to know and become spiritually one with his fellow-man, the spontaneous law of his society exists only as the outward mould of his self-governed inner liberty.[1]

What emerges from this passage is Aurobindo's conception of freedom as both the means and the object of human fulfillment. As a means, liberty allows men to grow; and ultimately, because of their nature, to "find out naturally and freely our harmony with our environment." A society that appreciates this truth "will give the same freedom to man seeking for political and social perfection and to all his other powers and aspirations."[2] As an object of fulfillment, or as a culmination of individual growth, freedom is seen as the highest state of spiritual realisation: "This great indefinable thing, liberty, is in its highest

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1. Aurobindo, The Ideal of Human Unity, in op.cit., pp.564-6.
2. Aurobindo, The Human Cycle in op.cit., pp.242-43.

and ultimate sense a state of being..."[1] Once this "state of being" is realized, law and order become an outward expression of an inward realisation of freedom and harmony; for the individual has then discovered the truth of his own Self, and thus his spiritual oneness with mankind.

Social Evolution and the Growth of Freedom

Aurobindo sees a growth of spiritual consciousness as manifest in the historical evolution of society, from its earliest stages to its future form of perfection. Individual and social progress amounts to an increasing fulfillment of the values of freedom and harmony; and Aurobindo's judgement of any society and of the political régime which it has raised, is based on the degree of freedom and harmony that has been achieved. An analysis of Aurobindo's theory of evolution is important for his political philosophy since it contains both his criticism of existing political systems and his conception of the direction in which society should move, if the individual is to achieve the highest level of freedom.

The pattern of social and political evolution set forth is divided into three broad cyclic periods of time:

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1. Aurobindo, War and Self-Determination in op.cit., p.835.

the infrarational (or irrational), the rational, and the spiritual; developing progressively, in that order. The first of these covers, historically, all of the pre-modern period; it is characterized by a primitive consciousness, dominated by instinct and innocent of rational judgement.[1] This early phase is traced to the beginning of ancient Greek civilisation, as well as to the pre-historic period of India; and, as Aurobindo traces the gradual movement of India and the West towards the rational age, he makes several notable observations. First, certain periods of Indian history, like the age of the Upanishads, are seen as marked by "immense spiritual development." Yet Aurobindo regards this advance as abortive for it rested on faulty foundations: spiritual insight was achieved without a corresponding advance in rational judgement; and without the support of reason, a civilisation cannot survive.[2] A second attempt at balancing traditional Indian beliefs with more modern assumptions appears in Aurobindo's strong criticism of "the world-shunning monk, the near ascetic," who cannot be "the true guide of mankind and its lawgiver." For "the monastic attitude implies a fear, and aversion, a distrust of life and its aspirations..."[3] Finally,

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1. Aurobindo, The Human Cycle in op.cit., pp.246-247.
2. Ibid., pp.252-253.
3. Ibid., p.241.

Aurobindo says that a movement from the infrarational to the rational age can only be achieved "when not a class or a few, but the multitude has learned to think, to exercise its intelligence actively — it matters not at first how imperfectly — upon their life, their needs, their rights, their duties, their aspirations as human beings."[1]

The rational or modern age, which man has now entered, has, in itself, three successive stages of development. The first is individualist and democratic, an age of liberty; the second is socialistic and communistic, an age of equality and of the State; the third is anarchic "in the highest sense of that much abused word, either a loose voluntary co-öperation or a free communalism with brotherhood or comradeship and not government for its principle."[2] In his consideration of the rational age, Aurobindo offers his criticism of contemporary democracy and socialism. After associating the emergence of democracy with an increase in freedom and individualism as well as in reason, Aurobindo argues that as an idea and a political movement democracy has, nevertheless, failed; and he blames its foibles on man's obdurate irrationality. The average man "does not use his freedom to arrive at a rational adjustment of his life with the life of others; his natural tendency

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1. Ibid., p.254.
2. Ibid., p.259.

is to enforce the aims of his life even at the expense of or, as it is euphemistically put, in competition with the life of others."[1] It is this characteristic of competition or irrational strife that Aurobindo abhors most in a democracy, as is evident from the following passage:

> The individualistic democratic ideal brings us at first in actual practice to the more and more precarious rule of a dominant class in the name of democracy over the ignorant, numerous and less fortunate mass. Secondly, since the ideal of freedom and equality is abroad and cannot any longer be stifled, it must lead to the increasing effort of the exploited masses to assert their down-trodden right and to turn, if they can, this pseudo-democratic falsehood into the real democratic truth; therefore, to a war of classes. Thirdly, it develops inevitably as part of its process a perpetual strife of parties, at first few and simple in composition, but afterwards as at the present time an impotent and sterilising chaos of names, labels, programmes, war-cries. All lift the banner of conflicting ideas or ideals, but all are really fighting out under that flag a battle of conflicting interests. Finally, individualistic democratic freedom results fatally in an increasing stress of competition which replaces the ordered tyrannies of the infrarational periods of humanity by a sort of ordered conflict. And this conflict ends in the survival not of the spiritually, rationally or physically fittest, but of the most fortunate and vitally successful. It is evident enough that whatever else it may be, this is not a rational order of society; it is not at all the perfection which the individualistic reason of man had contemplated as its ideal or set out to accomplish.[2]

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1. Ibid., p.264.
2. Ibid., pp.264-65.

Aurobindo's critique of democracy does recognize its advances in education, social and political freedom, and equality of opportunity; but, after all this, he returns to his main criticism that "instead of a harmoniously ordered society there has been developed a huge organized competitive system..."[1] The natural reaction to this excessive competition occurred with the rise of socialism. Socialism's "true nature, its real justification is the attempt of the human reason to carry on the rational ordering of society to its fulfillment, its will to get rid of this great parasitical excrescence of unbridled competition, this giant obstacle to any decent ideal or practice of human living. Socialism sets out to replace a system of organised economic battle by an organised order and peace."[2] The way in which socialism attacks the unsolved problems of democracy, however, is to supplant individual liberty with political and social equality; not only equality of opportunity, but of status. This involves an unwarranted deprivation of freedom, and a denial of the dignity of the individual.[3] Aurobindo deplores the excessive competition which democracy permits; but he is not willing to sacrifice individual liberty for social harmony, and he sees socialism as wrong in making this sacrifice. As the collective tendency in

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1. Ibid., p.267.
2. Ibid., p.268.
3. Ibid., pp.269-70.

socialism increases, the old democratic values of liberty, equality, and fraternity disappear, stifled along with the suppression of the individual.

> The only liberty left at the end would be the freedom to serve the community under the rigorous direction of the State authority; the only equality would be an association of all alike in a Spartan or Roman spirit of civic service with perhaps a like status, theoretically equal at least for all functions; the only brotherhood would be the sense of comradeship in devoted dedication to the organised social Self, the State. In fact the democratic trinity stripped of its godhead would fade out of existence; the collectivist ideal can very well do without them, for none of them belong to its grain and very substance.[1]

Aurobindo expands his attack on socialism into a vigorous indictment of totalitarianism, which includes, for him, both Soviet Communism and Italian and German Fascism. In the Soviet Union, there has emerged "a rigorous totalitarianism on the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariate, which amounts in fact to the dictatorship of the Communist party in the name or on behalf of the proletariate."[2] He applies this criticism of Communism to Fascism as well:

> The essential features are the same in Russia and in Fascist countries. ... There is the seizure of the life of the community by a dominant individual leader, Fuhrer, Dux, dictator, head of a small active minority, the

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1. Ibid., p.274.
2. Ibid., p.275.

> Nazi, Fascist or Communist party, and supported by a militarised partisan force; there is a rapid crystallisation of the social, economic, political life of the people into a new rigid organisation effectively controlled at every point; there is the compulsory casting of thought, education, expression, action into a set iron mould, a fixed system of ideas and life-motives, with a fierce and ruthless, often a sanguinary repression of all that denies and differs; there is a total unprecedented compression of the whole communal existence so as to compel a maximum efficiency and a complete unanimity of mind, speech, feeling, life.[1]

The great danger in the rise of Communism and Fascism lies in their sweeping annihilation of individual freedom, and thus of the rational development and further expansion of man. "Reason cannot do its work, act or rule if the mind of man is denied freedom to think or freedom to realise its thought by action in life."[2] Aurobindo's attack on socialism as a political theory concludes with his indictment of the whole conception of the State. "As State government develops," he says, "we have a real suppression or oppression of the minority by the majority or the majority by the minority, of the individual by the collectivity, finally, of all by the relentless mechanism of the State."[3] Even if the socialistic state somehow transformed itself and became democratic, its change would be a "chimera," for the very

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1. Ibid., p.276.
2. Ibid., p.277.
3. Ibid., p.283.

essence of the State is the imposition of a forced unity, and the subsequent suppression of creative thought. Thus, "Whatever the perfection of the organised State, the suppression or oppression of individual freedom by the will of the majority or of a minority would still be there as a cardinal defect vitiating its very principle."[1] For Aurobindo, then, the State is an evil because it inevitably suppresses liberty, and liberty is a spiritual as well as a political value. Socialism as a theory, "ignores the complexity of man's being and all that that complexity means. And especially it ignores the soul of man and its supreme need of freedom..."[2]

The final phase of the rational era is that of anarchism. Aurobindo explicitly rejects the "violent anarchism which seeks forcibly to react against the social principle or claims the right of man to 'live his own life' in the egoistic or crudely vitalistic sense."[3] Anarchism demands an internal change of the individual in society for "the more the outer law is replaced by an inner law, the nearer man will draw to his true and natural perfection."[4] This further evolution demands the growth of a higher form of freedom. "The solution lies in ... a spiritual, an

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1. Ibid., p.286.
2. Ibid., p.281.
3. Ibid., p.290.
4. Ibid., p.292.

inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order."[1]

The social and political framework within which this further evolution may occur cannot be that of the Nation-State system. The Nation, Aurobindo now believes, is wholly inadequate for providing the structure within which a continued growth of freedom and harmony may occur. A political order is needed "in which respect for individual liberty and free growth of the personal being to his perfection is harmonised with respect for the needs, efficiency, solidarity, natural growth and organic perfection of the corporate being."[2] On a world level, this order must take the form, not of an interrelated system of nation-states, or even of a "world state," but of a "world union." The implication is of a movement beyond the idea of a nation to that of a cosmopolitan community, which would maintain the diversity that now exists, and yet elicit a new spirit of coöperation. Aurobindo's concern is essentially with the preservation of a maximum degree of diversity among, not only individuals within a particular society, but also of individual cultural groups within a world community. He calls his ideal that of "unity in diversity," and explains it in these terms:

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1. Ibid., pp.295-96.
2. Aurobindo, The Ideal of Human Unity, in op.cit., p.523.

> Uniformity is not the law of life. Life exists by diversity; it insists that every group, every being shall be, even while one with all the rest in its universality, yet by some principle or ordered detail of variation unique. The over-centralisation which is the condition of a working uniformity, is not the healthy method of life. Order is indeed the law of life, but not an artificial regulation. The sound order is that which comes from within, as the result of a nature that has discovered itself and found its own law and the law of its relations with others. Therefore the truest order is that which is founded on the greatest possible liberty; for liberty is at once the condition of vigorous variation and the condition of self-finding.[1]

Only with the development of a new spirit of "unity in diversity," within the new political structure of a world union, where each individual or each group is dedicated to the fulfillment of all, "could there come the psychological modification of life and feeling and outlook which would accustom both individual and group to live in their common humanity first and most, subduing their individual and group-egoism, yet losing nothing of their individual or group-power to develop and express in its own way the divinity in man which, once the race was assured of its material existence, would emerge as the true object of human existence."[2]

The climax of this evolution occurs with a movement from the rational to the spiritual age. "It is this

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1. Ibid., pp.684-85.
2. Ibid., p.732. The question of what form the political organisation of this world union should assume is left untouched by Aurobindo.

kingdom of God within, the result of the finding of God not in a distant heaven but within ourselves, of which the state of society in an age of the Truth, spiritual age, would be the result and the external figure."[1]

The relation of this millenial vision of a spiritual age to Aurobindo's political thought is most fully developed in the concluding chapters of his magnum opus, The Life Divine, a work which purports to set forth the whole of his philosophy.[2] It is here that Aurobindo attempts to answer that which he had posed as the "central problem of thought," the task of achieving "the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity." The solution that he sees is emphatically a spiritual one, which regards all exclusively political approaches as nothing but palliatives. He flatly dismisses "the political, social, or other mechanical remedies which the mind is constantly attempting and which have always failed and will continue to fail to solve anything."[3]

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1. Aurobindo, The Human Cycle, p.343.
2. The first volume of The Life Divine was written in 1914-1916; much of volume two was finished later. The complete two volume edition was first published in 1939-1940.
3. Aurobindo, The Life Divine (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1960) p.1053.

> The most drastic changes made by these means change nothing; for the old ills exist in a new form: the aspect of the outward environment is altered, but man remains what he was. ... Only a spiritual change, an evolution of his being from the superficial mental towards the deeper spiritual consciousness, can make a real and effective difference. To discover the spiritual being in himself is the main business of the spiritual man and to help others towards the same evolution is his real service to the race; till that is done, an outward help can succour and alleviate, but nothing or very little more is possible.[1]

Once the evolution to a higher form of spiritual consciousness is achieved, the problem of harmonising individual freedom and social unity will be solved. The kernel of Aurobindo's reasoning on this problem is set forth in the final chapter of The Life Divine, in a passage that offers the most complete statement of his mature political philosophy.

> The individual as spirit or being is not confined within his humanity; he has been less than human, he can become more than human. The universe finds itself through him even as he finds himself in the universe, but he is capable of becoming more than the universe, since he can surpass it and enter into something in himself and in it and beyond it that is absolute. He is not confined within the community; although his mind and life are, in a way, part of the communal mind and life, there is something in him that can go beyond them. The community exists by the individual, for its mind and life and body are constituted by

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1. Ibid., pp.1053-54.

the mind and life and body of its composing individuals; if that were abolished or disaggregated, its own existence would be abolished or disaggregated, though some spirit or power of it might form again in other individuals; but the individual is not a mere cell of the collective existence; he would not cease to exist if separated or expelled from the collective mass. For the collectivity, the community is not even the whole of humanity and it is not the world: the individual can exist and find himself elsewhere in humanity or by himself in the world. If the community has a life dominating that of the individuals which constitute it, still it does not constitute their whole life. If it has its being which it seeks to affirm by the life of the individuals, the individual also has a being of his own which he seeks to affirm in the life of the community. But he is not tied to that, he can affirm himself in another communal life, or, if he is strong enough, in a nomad existence or in an eremite solitude where, if he cannot pursue or achieve a complete material living, he can spiritually exist and find his own reality and indwelling self of being.

The individual is indeed the key of the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself, who becomes conscious of the Reality. The movement of the collectivity is a largely subconscious mass movement; it has to formulate and express itself through the individuals to become conscious: its general mass consciousness is always less evolved than the consciousness of its most developed individuals, and it progresses in so far as it accepts their impress or develops what they develop. The individual does not owe his ultimate allegiance either to the State which is a machine or to the community which is a part of life and not the whole of life: his allegiance must be to the Truth, the Self, the Spirit, the Divine which is in him and in all; not to subordinate or lose himself in the mass, but to find and express that truth of being in himself and help the community and humanity in its seeking for its own truth and fullness of being must be his real object of

> existence. But the extent to which the power of the individual life or the spiritual Reality within it becomes operative, depends on his own development: so long as he is undeveloped, he has to subordinate in many ways his undeveloped self to whatever is greater than it. As he develops, he moves towards a spiritual freedom, but this freedom is not something entirely separate from all-existence; it has a solidarity with it because that too is the self, the same spirit. As he moves towards spiritual freedom, he moves also towards spiritual oneness. The spiritually realised, the liberated man is preoccupied, says the Gita, with the good of all beings; Buddha discovering the way of Nirvana must turn back to open that way to those who are still under the delusion of their constructive instead of their real being — or non-being; Vivekananda, drawn by the Absolute, feels also the call of the disguised Godhead in humanity and most the call of the fallen and the suffering, the call of the self to the self in the obscure body of the universe. For the awakened individual the realisation of his truth of being and his inner liberation and perfection must be his primary seeking, — first, because that is the call of the Spirit within him, but also because it is only by liberation and perfection and realisation of the truth of being that man can arrive at truth of living. A perfected community also can exist only by the perfection of its individuals, and perfection can come only by the discovery and affirmation in life by each of his own spiritual being and the discovery by all of their spiritual unity and a resultant life unity.[1]

This passage, which begins with a extreme statement of individualism, attempts to set forth the basis of the Indian reasoning on the reconciliation of individual freedom with social unity. The individual's allegiance, first,

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1. Ibid., pp.1247-9.

must not be to the State, which is at once rejected as "a machine" or even to the community, but to the Absolute, and thus to himself, as part of the Absolute. Yet once the individual attains realisation, to "help the community and humanity in its seeking for its own truth and fullness of being must be his real object of existence." This, because "as he moves towards spiritual freedom, he moves also towards spiritual oneness": he comes to know that truth which the Indian classical texts, the Upanishads, set forth, the identity of all being. And the path, a path of service to man, has already been indicated: by the Buddha, the Bhagavad Gita, and Vivekananda. Aurobindo emphasizes that the road he has indicated is the sole way to spiritual, and thus social, harmony. "A perfected community can exist only by the perfection of its individuals, and perfection can come only by ... the discovery by all of their spiritual unity and resultant life unity."

Aurobindo's writing illuminates, as much as any of the other thinkers considered here, the fundamental assumptions of his school. His effectiveness as an exponent of modern Indian political thought may be largely attributed to the way in which he regarded the enterprise he had undertaken; the purpose of his philosophy as he understood it. Few modern Indian writers have been more eminently equipped

than Aurobindo, in academic training and intellectual capacity, to absorb and adapt ideas from the Western tradition. Rammohun Roy may appear as a comparable figure; for he, like Aurobindo, was versed in several European languages and influenced by wide reading and travel abroad. Aurobindo, like Rammohun, was a Bengali brahman bent on reinterpreting his own tradition in the light of Western ideas; and no less than Rammohun, he was familiar with these ideas. Aurobindo's prolonged residence and education in England brought him into close contact with Christian teachings as well as with British liberal social and political thought; his thinking was certainly influenced, to some extent, by this climate of opinion. More than Rammohun, Aurobindo seems to have been attracted to French thought and culture. As a Cambridge undergraduate, he expressed enthusiasm for Paris as "the modern Athens" of the world,[1] and his continuing admiration for French civilisation is reflected in a variety of ways throughout his life. His writings often extol the French revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity; and even the language that he uses is peppered with French expressions, for he seems to have maintained a fluency in it until his death. The colony where he chose to spend most of his life

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1. A.B. Purani, op.cit., p.49.

was French; and the closest personal and spiritual relationship that he ever established arose with a French woman disciple, "The Mother," who succeeded him as head of the Pondicherry ashram. The important place that Europe occupied in Aurobindo's life and thought, then, should be appreciated.

At the same time, the extent of Western influence on Aurobindo's philosophy must not be exaggerated, for such an exaggeration would obscure the dominant purpose of his thought as he himself saw it. This purpose was the reconstruction of traditional Indian thought into a modern body of political, social, ethical, and spiritual ideas. It was a purpose that had guided the writings of the major nineteenth-century Indian thinkers: Rammohun Roy, Debendranath Tagore, Keshub Chandra Sen, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, and Vivekananda. The major assumptions underlying their thought were shared by Aurobindo, and the development which he gave to some of them comprised the main body of his political philosophy. This development occurred within a growing tradition of modern Indian ideas; and it may best be understood, and itself best become an instrument for understanding, by considering it as a part of this emergent tradition.

Of all the thinkers, Western or Indian, that Aurobindo mentions, no higher tribute is reserved than for

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.[1] Infatuated, as Aurobindo always was, throughout his life, with a pride of Indian civilisation, he wrote in exuberant tones of "the Indian Renaissance" which had begun with Vivekananda:

> It was in religion first that the soul of India awoke and triumphed. There were always indications, always great forerunners, but it was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and "mystic" without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him that the battle was won. The going forth of Vivekananda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer.[2]

Aurobindo wholly identified himself with the spirit of this great adventure. "The work that was begun at Dakshineshwar," he declared, "is far from finished, it is not even understood. That which Vivekananda received and strove to develop, has not yet materialised."[3] Aurobindo saw himself as carrying this work to its completion. The task undertaken at Pondicherry was dominated, if not intoxicated, but a desire to fulfill the ideas and aims suggested, for Aurobindo, by the spirit of Indian civilisation

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1. For Aurobindo's judgement of Ramakrishna see Aurobindo, On Himself, p.206.
2. Aurobindo, The Ideal of the Karmayogin, pp.26-27.
3. Ibid., p.23.

and personified in figures like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. It is in this light that Aurobindo may be approached and, hopefully, understood; and with this in mind his writings should be used to gain insight into the ideas of his contemporaries. He was a thinker who sought both to "preserve by reconstruction" his ancient tradition and to continue, to bring to fruition, the tradition of nineteenth-century Indian thought. The problems with which Aurobindo struggled and the premises directing his responses, had been suggested by Vivekananda. Equally important they were to be shared, developed, and given still other directions and dimensions, by Mahatma Gandhi.

CHAPTER VI

GANDHI : INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND SOCIAL ACTION

> In my opinion, we have used the term "Swaraj" without understanding its real significance. I have endeavoured to explain it as I understand it, and my conscience testifies that my life henceforth is dedicated to its attainment.[1]
>
> - Gandhi, 1909

The Early Development of Gandhi's Ideas on Freedom

"If you want to speak of politics in India," Vivekananda told a California audience in 1900, "you must speak through the language of religion."[2] Already at that time, in India, the truth of this remark had become clear: in Bengal, Aurobindo and Pal had begun to formulate a theology of nationalism; in Maharashtra, Tilak had found in Shivaji the symbol of a regenerated Hindu Raj, and, there too, G.K. Gokhale, soon to establish The Servants of India Society, looked ahead to "the spiritualisation of Indian politics." The future political leadership of India, however, was not, in 1900, being decided in either Bengal or Maharashtra. Experiments in the application of religious language and belief to the sphere of politics were being conducted elsewhere, outside India, in South Africa. All the major nationalist leaders at the turn of the century were aware of these experiments; but few, if any, foresaw

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1. M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1938) p.104.
2. Vivekananda, op.cit., VIII, p.77.

their ultimate significance. Nor could they have perceived what was ahead for the man behind them, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

"He is a man," said Gokhale of Gandhi, "who may be well described as a man among men, a hero among heroes, a patriot amongst patriots, and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has really reached its high watermark."[1] But this was in 1909: Gandhi had already spent sixteen years working with the Indian community in South Africa. And even Gokhale's appraisal came far ahead of its time; for he, almost alone among nationalist leaders, had taken a close interest in problems concerning the South African Government's discrimination against Indian immigrants. Gokhale had visited Gandhi on the "Tolstoy Farm" outside Pretoria; he had witnessed the early flowering of satyagraha, and he had acquired insight into Gandhi's emerging philosophy of life. Other Indian Congressmen did not know Gandhi this intimately. Thus, when he finally left South Africa, and arrived in Bombay on 9 January 1915, several political notables effused over his accomplishments, but there is no sign that any, outside Gokhale, even remotely anticipated that in less than six years Gandhi would have gained leadership of the Indian National Congress.

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1. Tendulkar, op.cit., I, p.112.

Nor does the British anticipation of Gandhi's ascent appear to have been any sharper. Lord Willingdon, then Governor of Bombay, may have presaged something, for he asked Gokhale to arrange a meeting with Gandhi immediately upon his arrival. "I ask one thing of you," he said to Gandhi. "I would like you to come and see me whenever you propose to take any steps concerning Government."[1] The general reaction,though, of the Government to Gandhi at this time seems to have been sympathetic rather than suspicious. Edwin S. Montagu, after his first interview with Gandhi in November, 1917, recorded in his diary,

> "He is a social reformer; he has a real desire to find grievances and to cure them, not for any reasons of self-advertisement, but to improve the conditions of his fellowmen. He is the real hero of the settlement of the Indian question in South Africa where he suffered imprisonment. He has just been helping the Government to find a solution for the grievances of the indigo labour in Bihar. He dresses like a coolie, forswears all personal advancement, lives practically on the air, and is a pure visionary. He does not understand details of schemes; all he wants is that we should get India on our side. He wants the millions of India to leap to the assistance of the British throne." 2

Montagu's impression should not be regarded as misguided, for it reflects the actual state of Gandhi's mind at this time. Until 1920, Gandhi not only remained loyal to the

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1. Ibid., p.158.
2. Edwin S. Montagu, An Indian Diary, ed. Venetia Montagu (London: Heinemann, 1930) p.58.

Empire, he actively supported it throughout the First World War. His friends upbraided him for inconsistency with his early ideas; but Gandhi defended his position by explaining the unique virtues of the British Government, which allowed him freedom to pursue his ideals.

> During my three months' tour in India as also in South Africa [Gandhi told a Madras Law Dinner in April, 1915] I have been so often questioned how I, a determined opponent of modern civilization and an avowed patriot, could reconcile myself to loyalty of the British Empire... It gives me the greatest pleasure ... to re-declare my loyalty to this British Empire and my loyalty is based upon very selfish grounds... I discovered that the British Empire had certain ideals with which I have fallen in love and one of those ideals is that every subject of the British Empire has the freest scope possible for his energies and honour and whatever he thinks is due to his conscience. I think that this is true of the British Empire as it is not true of any other Government. I feel, as you here perhaps know, that I am no lover of any Government, and I have more than once said that Government is best which governs least. And I have found that it is possible for me to be governed least under the British Empire. [1]

It may be argued that, in the period of 1915 to 1920, not only did Gandhi believe that the political ideas which he had developed in South Africa were compatible with British rule, but also that during this time he in fact did pursue these earlier ideas. At least two points would seem to substantiate this argument. First, Gandhi's

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1. M.K. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, Fourth Edition. (Madras: Natesan, 1938) p.310.

theories of swaraj and satyagraha freely developed in this five-year span; a fuller expression of these two concepts in particular was achieved. Second, Gandhi actually undertook satyagraha in several instances, and most notably in Champaran in 1917. The local government administration there attempted to suppress his efforts, but he eventually overcame their opposition. He then carried the struggle to a successful climax without unduly alienating the Government.[1] From this, it may appear that during this time Gandhi, enjoying full freedom under British rule, consistently maintained the ideas he had developed in South Africa.

One striking incident, however, belies this whole argument. In 1918, the Government called for increased Indian support of the war effort. Lord Chelmsford invited Gandhi to attend a Delhi War Conference in April, and asked for Gandhi's support of the resolution on recruitment. Tilak and Jinnah had not been invited, for they had raised the question of the terms on which Indian co-operation might be extended to the Government. Their qualms indicated a strong hesitation among many Indian leaders who wanted convincing evidence of Government concessions

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1. See, for example, the sentence already quoted from Montagu's Diary: "He has just been helping the Government to find a solution ... in Bihar.

to nationalist demands. Gandhi at first hesitated, but then was persuaded to attend, and he supported the resolution.[1] He set forth his reasoning in a letter to Lord Chelmsford written immediately after the Conference.

> I recognise that in the hour of its danger we must give, as we have decided to give, ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire of which we aspire in the near future to be partners in the same sense as the Dominions Overseas. But it is the simple truth that our response is due to the expectation that our goal will be reached all the more speedily. On that account, even as performance of duty automatically confers a corresponding right, people are entitled to believe that the imminent reforms alluded to in your speech will embody the main general principles of the Congress-League Scheme, and I am sure that it is this faith which has enabled many members of the Conference to tender to the Government their full hearted co-operation.[2]

After the Conference Gandhi turned himself into a "recruitment officer" and toured the country giving speeches. The arguments that he set forth in this campaign for mass enlistment can only be regarded as a complete contradiction of the beliefs which he had advanced earlier in South Africa. Gandhi not only argued from the standpoint of political expediency, he glorified participation in the war as a good in itself:

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1. B.R. Nanda, Mahatma Gandhi, A Biography (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958) p.168.
2. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, p.437.

> There can be no friendship between the brave and the effeminate. We are regarded as a cowardly people. If we want to become free from that reproach, we should learn the use of arms.[1]
>
> The foregoing argument will show that by enlisting in the army we help the Empire, we qualify ourselves for Swarajya, we learn to defend India and to a certain extent regain our lost manhood.[2]

The nature of this argument is reminiscent of the early Aurobindo; it sets forth a belief in the relation of violence to manliness not unlike the Indian terrorists, though quite unlike anything Gandhi had said before 1918, or was to say after that time. He had not forgotten his earlier ideas; but he had neatly compartmentalised them, in 1918, from the main stream of his activity.[3] Two events quickly brought these early ideas back into permanent focus: the Amritsar tragedy of 1919 and the British settlement of the Khilafat question early the following year.

On 13 April 1919 a crowd of Indian demonstrators assembled in Jallianwala Bagh, a small enclosed square in the city of Amritsar. Mob violence had occurred throughout the Punjab in connection with like demonstrations, and

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1. Ibid., p.443.
2. Ibid., p.445.
3. Ibid., p.420. "Military training," Gandhi said at the time, in defense of his action, "is intended for those who do not believe in satyagraha." But this did not explain why he, as a satyagrahi, urged military training.

General Dyer who was in command of the contingent at Amritsar, felt that drastic action had become necessary. He entered the square with fifty riflemen, fired suddenly and steadily into the crowd, and killed about 400 Indians in ten minutes.[1] When Gandhi heard the reports he was considerably shaken. One of his closest friends, Charles Andrews remarks,

> No one can understand Mahatma Gandhi's attitude towards Great Britain and the British Empire unless he has come to realize that 'Amritsar' was the critical event which changed Mahatma Gandhi from a wholehearted supporter into a pronounced opponent.[2]

General Dyer's icy defence of his action reeked to Gandhi of unspeakable brutality; and the subsequent Report of the Hunter Committee seemed only to whitewash the event. Perhaps nothing shocked Gandhi more, though, than the reaction of the British public: he had expected unanimous repentance, in accord with his belief in the English sense of justice; but he found instead ambivalence, and even efforts to exonerate Dyer completely.[3]

The Khilafat issue was seen by Gandhi and the Indian Muslims as representing a British breach of promise. Lloyd George, they contended, had promised the preservation of the Turkish Sultan's temporal powers; but the treaty

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1. Tendulkar, op.cit., I, p.258.
2. C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930) p.230.
3. Nanda, op.cit., pp.176-180.

with Turkey, concluded in 1920, had betrayed this assurance. The Khilafat incident contributed to Gandhi's growing disillusionment with British rule; but it did not affect him in the same way as Amritsar. The latter filled him with a sense of moral repulsion, and perhaps convinced him that Britain would not give up India gracefully. The former issue, however, gave Gandhi a stand on which he could champion the Muslims' cause and thus rally all-Indian support; it presented an exceptional opportunity for gaining Hindu-Muslim unity, a chance, Gandhi remarked, which would probably not recur for a hundred years.[1] The Non-co-operation movement emerged from the grievances surrounding the Amritsar and Khilafat issues; together they prompted Gandhi's unequivocal opposition to the British Raj. "The knowledge of the Punjab and Khilafat betrayal," he wrote in late 1920, "has revolutionised my view of the existing system of Government."[2]

However, the shock of Amritsar and the "Khilafat betrayal" were only the immediate and not the fundamental causes of Gandhi's volte-face. These two events merely revealed to him the implications of political attitudes that

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1. Ibid., p.185.
2. M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 1919-1922, 29 September 1920, I, (1922) p.375.

he had developed much earlier; they made him fully aware, for the first time, of the logical consequences of all that he had learned and taught in South Africa. This would explain why, in the years immediately before the crystalisation process of 1919-1920 occurred, his thoughts and actions on the war effort should have been so muddled and sharply contradictory of earlier held beliefs. Once the war was over, Gandhi quickly returned to these beliefs; and they now remained in the fore for the rest of his life. To understand them, and especially his idea of freedom, one must turn to the genesis of Gandhi's thought, his South African experience.

South Africa and Hind Swaraj

"What Gandhi did to South Africa," observes one of his biographers, "was less important than what South Africa did to him."[1] South Africa, as it has often and accurately been said, provided the laboratory for Gandhi's experiments; it proved an excellent testing ground, since many of the problems which he later found in India occurred there in miniature. Moreover, no Indian had confronted these problems in South Africa before: Gandhi was writing on a clean slate, he was able to try out almost any methods he chose.

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1. Nanda, op.cit., p.121.

Gandhi had formed beliefs before he arrived in South Africa. His Autobiography testifies to the lasting impression of childhood experiences, impressions and lessons which were to effect the later development of the two ideas that dominated his thought: truth and non-violence.[1] Then almost three years were spent as a law student in London; during this time Gandhi discovered the Sermon on the Mount, and came to understand the Bhagavadgita through Sir Edwin Arnold's English translation.[2] Gandhi later recalled that at this time, "My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the Gita, The Light of Asia and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly."[3] Religious and moral attitudes had thus begun to form in London. But they took definite shape only in South Africa. Moreover, he does not appear to have given any thought at all to political questions before his direct involvement with the problems of the Indian community in Natal.

Gandhi remarked tersely in Young India in 1927, "South Africa gave the start to my life's mission."[4] The ideas which inspired that mission, merged there into a coherent body of thought. This mission was one of self-

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1. Gandhi, Autobiography, pp.25-28 and 34-35.
2. Ibid., pp.67-69.
3. Ibid., p.69.
4. Young India, 17 March 1927, III, 121.

realisation; but before Gandhi left South Africa he knew that that must involve a struggle for India's freedom as well. He had left Bombay for Durban in 1893 as a legal counsel for Dada Abdulla and Company; he returned to India twenty-one years later with a sense of mission, a reservoir of practical experience in social and political reform, and with the ideas which form the basis of his political thought. That is what South Africa did for Gandhi.[1]

The main ideas which emerged from Gandhi's South African experience are contained in his short work, Hind Swaraj, easily one of the key writings of his entire career. The original text was written in Gandhi's native language of Gujarati in 1909 during a return voyage from London to South Africa. This was first published serially in Gandhi's newspaper Indian Opinion; later it went through numerous reprints, became a text for the Indian nationalist movement, and was occasionally banned by the Government. In a significant comment on Hind Swaraj written in 1921,

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1. The chief influences on Gandhi's thought during his South African experience, aside from the Sermon on the Mount and the Gita, came from Tolstoy's The Kingdom of God is Within You, Ruskin's Unto This Last, and Thoreau's essay On Civil Disobedience. The two main personal influences were both Indian: Rajchandbhai, a Jain religious teacher and G.K. Gokhale. Gandhi also read Vivekananda, and was sufficiently impressed to have tried (unsuccessfully) to see him while in Calcutta. The actual extent of any of these influences on Gandhi's thought is difficult to determine for he gave to each a personal twist, using it as he saw fit.

Gandhi stated the purpose behind the book.

> It was written ... in answer to the Indian school of violence, and its prototype in South Africa. I came in contact with every known Indian anarchist in London. Their bravery impressed me, but I feel that their zeal was misguided. I felt that violence was no remedy for India's ills, and that her civilization required the use of a different and higher weapon for self-protection. The Satyagraha of South Africa was still an infant hardly two years old. But it had developed sufficiently to permit me to write of it with some degree of confidence ... It [Hind Swaraj] teaches the gospel of love in the place of that of hate. It replaces violence with self-sacrifice. It pits soul-force against brute force.[1]

The aim of Hind Swaraj was to answer the anarchists with an alternative to violence, derived from Gandhi's earliest experiments with Satyagraha. Equally important is the book's concern with the concept from which it takes its title: this is Gandhi's first extensive statement on swaraj, and the ideas on it which he sets forth here provide the basis for much of his future thinking on the meaning of freedom. Hind Swaraj, then, is a statement on both the method and the goal of Gandhi's thought: Satyagraha and Swaraj. The correspondence which is drawn here between these two concepts is one of the crucial messages of the book.

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1. Young India, 26 January 1921, I, p.866.

Gandhi had written of swaraj before 1909; but his reference to the term is seldom, and it indicates only a limited awareness of the concept as it was then developing in India. The first explicit use of swaraj in Gandhi's Collected Works occurs with a brief reference to Dadabhai Naoroji's Congress Presidential Address in 1906. Gandhi wrote in Indian Opinion:

> The address by the Grand Old Man of India is very forceful and effective. His words deserve to be enshrined in our hearts. The substance of the address is that India will not prosper until we wake up and become united. To put it differently, it means that it lies in our hands to achieve swaraj, to prosper and to preserve the rights we value ... For our part we are to use only the strength that comes from unity and truth. That is to say, our bondage in India can cease this day, if all the people unite in their demands and are ready to suffer any hardships that may befall them.[1]

These few sentences contain the germs of the concept of freedom that Gandhi was soon to develop; and thirty-four years later he was still admonishing the Congress, and the Indian people, that swaraj "will not drop from heaven, all of a sudden, one fine morning. But it has to be built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort."[2]

In the months following Naoroji's address, and before the writing of Hind Swaraj, Gandhi rarely uses the

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1. Gandhi, Indian Opinion, 5 January 1907 in Works, VI, p.269.
2. Tendulkar, op.cit., VI, p.34.

term swaraj; he does write occasionally, though, on his idea of freedom. It is noteworthy that immediately before his departure for London in June 1909, Gandhi had spent three months in a Pretoria prison for civil disobedience. There he read The Gita, Upanishads, and the Bible, as well as Ruskin, Tolstoy, Emerson and Thoreau. Of these writers, he seems to have been most impressed, at this time, by Thoreau, and particularly by this passage from On Civil Disobedience:

> "I saw that, if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through before they could get to be as free as I was."[1]

Gandhi remarks on these lines that the individual who pursues truth through civil disobedience may be imprisoned but "his soul is thus free," and "taking this view of jail life, he feels himself quite a free being." He concludes that a right understanding and enjoyment of freedom "solely rests with individuals and their mental attitude ..."[2]

Several years later Gandhi was to write:

> "Whilst the views expressed in Hind Swaraj are held by me, I have but endeavoured humbly to follow Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Emerson and other writers, besides the masters of Indian philosophy."[3]

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1. Thoreau, quoted by Gandhi in Tendulkar, op.cit., I, p.100.
2. Ibid., p.100.
3. Ibid., p.109.

When Gandhi left Capetown for London, then, the strands of his ideas on freedom, gleaned from both Indian and Western sources, as well as from his own experience, were in his mind; the stimulus for weaving them together into a coherent pattern, and fusing them with a programme of social action, came during his four months stay in London.

Gandhi arrived on 10 July; nine days earlier London had been shaken by the murder of Sir Curzon Wyllie. The assassin was the young Indian terrorist, Madanlal Dhinga, who delivered, at his trial, a stirring speech on patriotism. The city was afire with discussions among anarchists, nationalists and terrorists; Gandhi became intensely involved. He argued the views on satyagraha which were soon to become an integral part of his political and personal creed: India could only gain her freedom through non-violence; terrorism would only cause disruption and decay. From these conversations emerged the ideas set forth in Hind Swaraj.[1]

Hind Swaraj takes the form of a dialogue between "Reader" and "Editor". The former argues, with haste and rashness, terrorist ideas; the latter presents Gandhi's

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1. Gandhi describes Hind Swaraj as "a faithful record of conversations I had with workers, one of whom was an avowed anarchist." Hind Swaraj, p.18.

own case. At the outset, the Editor appears on the defensive; gradually and patiently he subdues the anarchist's storm; and the Reader yields, not only to superior reasoning, but to the force and novelty of an alternative which seems more revolutionary than his own position. As a statement of political thought Hind Swaraj has considerable limitations: it is a brief polemical tract more than a logical development of a serious and measured argument; written hastily, in less than ten days, it suffers from occasional disjointedness and egregious overstatement. Yet the essence of Gandhi's political and social philosophy is here; and he could write in 1938, "after the stormy thirty years through which I have since passed I have seen nothing to make me alter the view expounded in it."[1]

The book opens with the Reader's attack upon the Indian Congress as "an instrument for perpetuating British rule"; Moderates like Naoroji and Gokhale are indicted as unworthy "friends of the English". Gandhi rises to their defence: he insists that they, along with Englishmen like Hume and Wedderburn, deserve India's respect for their selflessness and for preparing the foundations of Indian Home Rule. The nature of Gandhi's argument, however, is crucial. He neither identifies himself with the Moderates,

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1. Ibid., p.18.

nor does he consider their position adequate; he only argues that their contribution was necessary to make further advance possible. "If, after many years of study," the Editor contends, "a teacher were to teach me something and if I were to build a little more on the foundation laid by that teacher, I would not, on that account, be considered wiser than the teacher. He would always command my respect. Such is the case with the Grand Old Man of India."[1] The Reader reluctantly agrees, but then turns his ire against Gokhale, and elicits this reply: "Professor Gokhale occupies the place of a parent. What does it matter if he cannot run with us? A nation that is desirous of securing Home Rule cannot afford to despise its ancestors. We shall become useless, if we lack respect for our elders." "Are we, then, to follow him in every respect?" "I never said any such thing. If we conscientiously differed from him, the learned Professor himself would advise us to follow the dictates of our conscience rather than him."[2] Thus the Moderates are defended in a proper, almost reverential, spirit; yet, in fact, they are set aside as "ancestors" who have played out their roles. The Congress appears in much the same manner, worthy of respect but no longer a dynamic organ of progress. "All I have to show," the Editor

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1. Ibid., p.21. (The reference is to Naoroji)
2. Ibid., p.22.

concludes, "is that the Congress gave us a foretaste of Home Rule."[1] And this indeed is all that he does show.

Gandhi's attitude toward the Congress, and the Moderates who in 1909 controlled the Congress, is clear; but he has not yet mentioned the Extremists. Aurobindo, Pal, Tilak, and Lajpat Rai were all Extremist leaders of considerable renown at this time; yet their names do not appear in Hind Swaraj. A passing, but revealing, reference is made to the Extremist group at the end of the second chapter. "Our leaders," the Editor observes, "are divided into two parties: the Moderates and the Extremists. These may be considered as the slow party and impatient party."[2] "Slow" and "impatient": this is how Gandhi characterizes the two main sections of Indian political leadership. India cannot move ahead with slow leaders; yet hasty and rash action may only result in ultimate retrogression. The Moderates have been left behind; but the Extremists are found to be irresponsible. It is no coincidence that the Editor often criticises the Reader for his "impatience": Hind Swaraj is a direct reply to the Extremists as well as to the lunatic fringe of Indian anarchists and terrorists. Early in the book, then, Gandhi dismisses the leadership of both national parties in India as unviable. The moment has

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1. Ibid., p.24.
2. Ibid., p.26.

arrived for a statement of his own position: a philosophy and programme of action which appear to gain the best of both sides, not through steering a mean course, but rather by moving forward to a new alternative and a fresh conception of freedom.

What is Swaraj?

The Reader now poses a central question, "What is swaraj?" and the remainder of the book is occupied with a consideration of that question. The Reader gives his version of swaraj first: "As is Japan, so must India be. We must have our own navy, our army, and we must have our own splendour, and then will India's voice ring through the world ... If the education we have received be of any use, if the works of Spencer, Mill and others be of any importance, and if the English Parliament be the Mother of Parliaments, I certainly think that we should copy the English people ... It is, therefore, proper for us to import their institutions."[1] The Editor disagrees:

> You have drawn the picture well. In effect it means this: that we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan. This is not the Swaraj that I want ...

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1. Ibid., pp.29-30.

> It is as difficult for me to understand the true nature of Swaraj as it seems to you to be easy. I shall therefore, for the time being, content myself with endeavouring to show that what you call Swaraj is not truly Swaraj.[1]

The subsequent discussion, which occupies the middle section of the book, comprises Gandhi's notorious blanket condemnation of Western civilisation. The argument is grossly overstated, often misguided, and, in some instances, as with the criticism of doctors and hospitals, lapses into pure fantasy.[2] The main point of this section is that all Western civilisation should be shunned, for it "takes note neither of morality nor of religion."[3] All its trappings, from its parliamentary system of government to the whole of its industrial complex, are foreign to real civilisation. If Indians are to attain swaraj, they must not imitate the Western example, but construct a civilisation on the simple ethical and religious truths found in their own tradition.[4] "The tendency of the Indian civilisation is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilisation is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God."[5] This sweeping categorisation of Eastern and Western civilisations

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1. Ibid., p.30.
2. Ibid., pp.58-60.
3. Ibid., p.37.
4. Ibid., pp.60-63.
5. Ibid., p.63.

as "moral" and "immoral" was, by the time Gandhi wrote, a commonplace in modern Indian thought; no indictment of the West, however, appeared that was more severe than that of Hind Swaraj, for everything modern was here placed on the chopping block. Gokhale thought this outburst so crude that he predicted the whole book's early destruction by Gandhi himself.

Although Gandhi always maintained concurrence with these early views set forth in Hind Swaraj, he sought later to modify his judgement of Western civilisation. In 1921 he accepted as an immediate, though not ultimate, goal, "Parliamentary Swaraj". "The least that Swaraj means," he said, "is a settlement with the Government in accordance with the wishes of the chosen representatives of the people."[1] Similarly with his views on machinery, he modified his stand, contending in 1924, "What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such ... I am aiming not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation."[2] Yet the substance of the view of civilisation advanced in Hind Swaraj remained intact throughout Gandhi's life, and deeply affected his conception of the nature of the good society. At its worst this view manifests itself in a negative suspicion of the West, and a highly provincial

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1. Young India, 15 December 1921, I, p.867.
2. Gandhi, Young India, 1924-1926, 13 November 1924, II, p.1029.

world outlook. At its best, it moulded a theory of the good society suited to the Indian situation; a social order of small communities, each seeking attainment of individual freedom and social equality through mutual co-operation and respect. This was his vision of Sarvodaya, the "Welfare of All": the pattern of an Indian society that had indeed achieved swaraj.

> In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.
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> Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it.[1]

A right form of civilisation, Gandhi concludes in Hind Swaraj, "is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization means 'good conduct'."[2] In striving to build this

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1. Gandhi, Harijan, 28 July 1946 in Sarvodaya (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1958) pp.70-71.
2. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, p.61.

civilisation, Indians will not only construct a free nation, they will come to realize swaraj within themselves. For just as a free civilisation demands "mastery over our mind and our passions," so freedom for the individual consists of each person establishing rule over himself, mastery of his mind and passions. "If we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands ... but such Swaraj has to be experienced, by each one for himself."[1] This is the core of Gandhi's idea of freedom. He reiterates it at the end of Hind Swaraj: "Real home-rule is self-rule or self-control."[2] As a concept, this idea is at one with Vivekananda's understanding of the meaning of freedom. And Aurobindo said, "By liberty we mean the freedom to obey the law of our being..." Like Vivekananda and Aurobindo, Gandhi was above all concerned with right obedience to one's self. Several years after writing Hind Swaraj he declared, "The only tyrant I accept in this world is the 'still small voice' within."[3] For Gandhi, as well as for other members of this school, such tyranny was a necessary element of swaraj.

Three main aspects of Gandhi's idea of swaraj may

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1. Ibid., p.65.
2. Ibid., p.104.
3. Tendulkar, op.cit., II, p.91.

be noted, at this point, to indicate the form which it came to assume after his initial statement of it in 1909. First, Gandhi always saw freedom as primarily an individual and not a collective quality; in this respect, he was at one with Vivekananda and Aurobindo. "Swaraj of a people," Gandhi affirmed, "means the sum-total of the Swaraj (self-rule) of individuals."[1] Just as Aurobindo emphasised that the realisation of spiritual freedom demanded an enjoyment of civil liberties, so Gandhi stressed the necessity of individual political and social freedom.

> If the individual ceases to count what is left of society? Individual freedom alone can make a man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is wrested from him, he becomes an automaton and society is ruined. No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom. It is contrary to the very nature of man."[2]

As Gandhi's thought matured, he placed increasing emphasis upon non-violence, and saw its observance as closely linked with the preservation of liberty. He argued that "Civil Liberty consistent with the observance of non-violence is the first step towards swaraj. It is the foundation of freedom."[3] Yet Gandhi would not allow even this commitment to non-violence to jeopardize the individual's enjoyment of

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1. Gandhi, Harijan, 25 March 1939 in Socialism of My Conception (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957) p.143.
2. Gandhi, Harijan, 1 February 1942, in Democracy: Real and Deceptive, p.31.
3. Tendulkar, op.cit., V, p.129.

political and social freedom. "If I had my way as the president of a non-violent Indian republic, I should not hesitate to give those who are violently inclined, the liberty of violent speech."[1] He summed up his belief in the elementary importance of individual liberty, near the end of his life, when he said:

> "to make mistakes as a free man ... is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them [for] the mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve, in fact it worsens. And when compulsion is removed, all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force." 2

Second, although Gandhi carefully specified the conventional civil liberties of the press, speech, association, and religion as fundamental to swaraj,[3] he held that the essence of freedom must constitute more than social, political or economic liberty. Swaraj "is infinitely greater than and includes independence."[4]

> Let there be no mistake about my conception of Swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So, at one end you have political independence; at the other, economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is Dharma, i.e. religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all.

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1. Ibid., p.328.
2. Harijan, 29 September 1946 in Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1958) 2 vols., II, p.671.
3. Tendulkar, op.cit., II, p.78 and V, pp.326-27.
4. Young India, 12 January 1928, III, p.547.

> You may recognize it by the name of Truth, not the honesty of experience, but the living Truth that pervades everything and will survive all destruction and all transformation. Moral and social uplift may be recognized by the term we are used to, i.e. Non-violence. Let us call this the square of Swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue. We cannot achieve this political and economic freedom without Truth and Non-violence in concrete terms, without a living faith in God, and hence moral and social elevation.[1]

These were the four points on Gandhi's compass of swaraj: Truth, Non-violence, political and economic independence; swaraj remained incomplete without the realization of each, since each, for Gandhi, was interwoven with all.

Finally, Gandhi's conception of swaraj made the same distinction between "inner" and "outer" forms of freedom conceived of earlier by Vivekananda and Aurobindo. In Vivekananda's thought, this distinction involved a relegation of political freedom and national independence to a subsidiary position. But as the struggle for political independence quickened, it became increasingly difficult for India's leaders to appreciate the advantages of "inner" freedom. Aurobindo attempted to identify national with spiritual freedom, but this resulted in an extreme form of

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1. Gandhi, Harijan, 2 January 1937 in Socialism of My Conception, op.cit., p.120. It should be noted that Gandhi's conception of "economic independence", though considered by him to be an aspect of swaraj, as well as a vital component of his Constructive Programme, will not be examined, here, in this analysis of his political thought.

religious nationalism which threatened individual liberty. This approach was eventually abandoned by Aurobindo, and it was never attempted by Gandhi. Gandhi consistently emphasized the supreme value of a supra-political form of freedom; but few other Indian political leaders shared his views on this issue. His difficulties are well expressed in this "Message to the Ceylon National Congress," delivered in Ceylon in 1927:

> It is, I know, a pleasureable pastime (and I have indulged in it sufficiently as you know), to strive against the powers that be, and to wrestle with the Government of the day, especially when that Government happens to be a foreign Government and a Government under which we rightly feel we have not that scope which we should have, and which we desire, for expansion and fullest self-expression. But I have also come to the conclusion that self-expression and self-government are not things which may be either taken from us by anybody or which can be given us by anybody. It is quite true that if those who happen to hold our destinies, or seem to hold our destinies in their hands, are favourably disposed, are sympathetic, understand our aspirations, no doubt it is then easier for us to expand. But after all self-government depends entirely upon our own internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heaviest odds. Indeed, self-government which does not require that continuous striving to attain it and to sustain it is not worth the name. I have therefore endeavoured to show both in word and in deed, that political self-government — that is self-government for a large number of men and women, — is no better than individual self-government, and therefore it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule, and so as you know also, I have striven in India to place this ideal before the

> people in season and out of season, very often much to the disgust of those who are politically minded merely.[1]

Gandhi argued, until the end of his life — not only before Indian independence but also in the months after — that swaraj must remain hollow and meaningless without the acquisition of "inward freedom"; and for this a course of action should be followed through which Indians might gain sovereignty over themselves as well as over their nation.

> The outward freedom therefore that we shall attain will only be in exact proportion to the inward freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment. And if this is the correct view of freedom, our chief energy must be concentrated upon achieving reform from within. In this much needed work all who will can take an equal share. We need neither to be lawyers, nor legislators to be able to take part in the great effort. When this reform takes place on a national scale no outside power can stop our onward march.[2]

Satyagraha

The origins of satyagraha in Gandhi's South African experience were traced in the first chapter. A closer consideration may now be made of the relationship between satyagraha and swaraj. This involves, primarily, an examination of the various forms which satyagraha assumes

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1. Young India, 1 December 1927, III, p.487.
2. Young India, 1 November 1928, III, pp.901-02.

in its development from an elementary method of civil disobedience to an all-embracing approach to problems of moral, social, and political reform. Since Gandhi believed in the inseparable relationship of swaraj to satyagraha, a development in one was always paralleled, in his thought, by a similar development in the other: as a reformer, engrossed in problems of change, Gandhi sought to keep his goal of swaraj firmly tied to his method of satyagraha.

The basic premise underlying the relationship between these two concepts is set forth in Hind Swaraj; there, swaraj is defined as self-rule, and satyagraha represents the way in which the individual, through voluntary self-sacrifice, may gain control over himself. The special function of satyagraha, when extended to the political realm, is to strengthen the individual's "soul-force" as he offers civil disobedience against the Government.

> Passive resistance [remarks the Editor in Hind Swaraj] is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the Government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I force the Government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.[1]

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1. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, p.79.

When the individual's spiritual power, or soul-force, becomes fully developed through self-sacrifice, he has mastered the technique, and has attained swaraj. "Control over the mind is alone necessary [for the passive resister] and when that is attained, man is free ..."[1] The belief in achieving self-realisation through voluntary self-sacrifice and suffering is embedded in the Indian tradition; Gandhi's innovation emerged with his relation of this ancient belief to the modern Indian call for social and political change. The Government came to serve as the object on which the satyagrahi sharpened his horns of self-discipline. The aim of self-realisation or swaraj became inseparably linked with the political demand of Home-Rule. And finally satyagraha or passive resistance was seen as the only way to achieve swaraj for "there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree," and the lofty goal of swaraj may thus only be attained with the purest of means.[2] "Real Home-Rule," the Editor concludes, "is self-rule or self-control. The way to it is passive resistance: that is soul-force or love-force."[3] The fundamental correspondences were thus drawn before Gandhi left South Africa; the

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1. Ibid., p.82.
2. Ibid., pp.71, 75-76.
3. Ibid., p.104.

further developments which occurred in these two key concepts of swaraj and satyagraha were considerable, but they all rested upon the premises set forth in Hind Swaraj.

The development in Gandhi's thinking on the concepts of satyagraha and swaraj after his arrival in Bombay on 9 January 1915, may be indicated through a comparison of two of his writings. One of these was written in 1914, immediately before his departure from South Africa; the other was delivered as a Presidential Address before the First Gujarat Political Conference in November 1917. The earlier writing was published in Gandhi's South African paper Indian Opinion, under the title "Theory and Practice of Passive Resistance". The discussion of satyagraha in this article remains substantially unchanged from that presented five years earlier in Hind Swaraj. Gandhi still objects to the phrase "passive resistance" as inexpressive of the positive forces which satyagraha represents; but he has not yet abandoned the phrase for satyagraha, even though he had coined the latter term seven years earlier. This suggests that at this point he continued to conceive of satyagraha in the limited sense of civil disobedience. He speaks of the method, in this writing, as "based upon the immutable maxim that government of the people is possible only so long as they consent

either consciously or unconsciously to be governed."[1] A series of examples follows of the technique's efficacy in South Africa: all are instances of civil disobedience against the Government.[2]

A strikingly different note appears in the Gujarat Address, and this difference may only be attributed to the problems which confronted Gandhi after his return to India. He had known of these problems in South Africa, but he does not seem to have worked out a method of approach, there, or fully anticipated their seriousness in India. Gokhale had asked Gandhi to abstain for one year, after his arrival, from the expression of political views and from all political activity; he was to learn of India's major political and social problems and consider potential avenues of approach. Gandhi followed this advice; and, when the period of abstinence ended, he seems to have formed conclusions which guided his immediate efforts. The great single goal remained the achievement of swaraj; and, as before, it was seen in the Gujarat Address as a task which must begin with the acquisition of self-rule by the individual.

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1. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, p.190.
2. Ibid., pp.189-191.

> The first step to Swaraj lies in the individual. The great truth: 'As with the individual so with the universe,' is applicable here as elsewhere. If we are ever torn by conflict from within, if we are ever going astray, and if instead of ruling our passions we allow them to rule us, Swaraj can have no meaning for us. Government of self, then, is primary education in the school of Swaraj.[1]

From this point, however, the meaning of swaraj expands; it embraces the moral and social aims which eventually form the basis of Gandhi's Constructive Programme. These are the aims which, after 1915, Gandhi decided swaraj must encompass, and toward which he directed his method of satyagraha: the abolition of untouchability, improved health and hygiene in the cities and villages, temperance reform, Hindu-Muslim unity, Swadeshi, advancement of women, and establishment of closer contact between the educated élite and the villagers.[2] Many of these issues had been championed before by social reformers; Gandhi's contribution was, as a national political leader, to insist that these reforms were integral components of swaraj itself. No argument was to become more central than this to Gandhi's idea of freedom, and he now set it forth in the Gujarat Address:

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1. Ibid., p.409.
2. Ibid., pp.410-17, 421.

> We may petition the government, we may agitate in the Imperial Council for our rights, but for a real awakening of the people, internal activity is more important....
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> One sometimes hears it said: 'Let us get the government of India in our own hands and everything will be all right.' There could be no greater superstition than this. No nation has thus gained its independence. The splendour of the spring is reflected in every tree, the whole earth is then filled with the freshness of youth. Similarly, when the Swaraj spirit has really permeated society, a stranger suddenly come upon us will observe energy in every walk of life, he will find national servants engaged, each according to his own abilities, in a variety of public activities.[1]

One instance of the "internal activity" to which Gandhi refers had occurred throughout the very year of the Gujarat Conference in Champaran. Gandhi had gone there, to the north-western corner of Bihar, in April 1917, at the request of indigo share-croppers to investigate their grievances with the planters. He began his inquiry but the local government intervened and ordered him to leave Champaran immediately. He elected to offer civil disobedience; the Lieutenant-Governor of the province responded by dismissing the case. Gandhi proceeded with his investigation, and compiled a long indictment of the planters. A commission was eventually formed of planters and government officials; Gandhi represented the peasants.

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1. Ibid., p.416.

The result was a settlement for repayment of funds which the planters had extorted.[1] From the time of Gandhi's arrival in Champaran, however, he concerned himself with more than the legal aspects of the problem. The poverty of the area was immense and he soon launched his Constructive Programme. Swaraj itself, he remarked on his arrival, depended upon the uplift of these villagers.[2] A series of schools was constructed, village industries established, sanitation and personal hygiene programmes begun, medical relief offered, and volunteers organized for the construction of wells and roads. Later he wrote with some regret of his efforts in Champaran, "It was my desire to continue the constructive work for some years, to establish more schools and to penetrate the villages more effectively."[3] This hope was not to be fulfilled. But Champaran had taught Gandhi some valuable lessons: here, he discovered the full potential of the Constructive Programme; the manifold nature of satyagraha opened to him; and he came to know the essential connection between social reform and the political aims of the nation. These lessons were later recorded in his Autobiography: "The Champaran struggle was a proof of the fact that disinterested service

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1. Louis Fischer, The Life of Mahatma Gandhi (London: Jonathan Cape, 1915) pp.167-173 and Tendulkar, I, pp.198-213.
2. Tendulkar, I, p.201.
3. Gandhi, Autobiography, p.425.

of the people in any sphere ultimately helps the country politically."[1]

Gandhi came to the Gujarat Conference, then, fresh from his Champaran success, and it is not surprising that his Presidential Address concludes with a development of his concept of satyagraha, as well as an expression of confidence in its abundant potentialities. He advocates satyagraha for the resolution of India's major social and religious problems, as well as for political reform. "Upon reflection we find that we can employ Satyagraha even for social reform. We can rid ourselves of many defects in our social institutions. We can settle the Hindu-Mohammedan problem, and we can deal with political questions. It is well that for the sake of facilitating progress we divide our activities according to the subjects handled. But it should never be forgotten that all are interrelated."[2]

> This Satyagraha [he concluded] is India's special weapon. It has had others but Satyagraha has commanded greater attention. It is omnipresent and is capable of being used at all times and under all circumstances. It does not require a Congress license. He who knows its power cannot help using it. Even as the eye-lashes automatically protect the eyes, so does Satyagraha, when kindled automatically, protect the freedom of the soul.[3]

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1. Ibid., p.415.
2. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, p.421.
3. Ibid., pp.418-19.

The significance of the 1917 Gujarat Address lies in the development which it signals of Gandhi's earlier ideas: a series of advances made in response to the political and social problems which he encountered after his arrival in India. With this Address, constructive work has found a permanent place alongside non-co-operation; for the fulfilment of swaraj is seen to rely upon "internal activity" or social reform. Satyagraha has become the method for pursuing this activity, the sovereign corrective of India's social, as well as political, ills. Henceforth the term "passive resistance," with its non-Indian and non-religious associations, disappears: satyagraha has outgrown civil disobedience. The theme of "swaraj through satyagraha" now dominates Gandhi's political thought, growing in theory as well as in religious symbolism; above all, these ideas merge together into an inseparable relationship.

In Hind Swaraj, Gandhi had stressed the essential relationship of the means to the end; twenty years later, asked to define his national goal, he placed even greater emphasis upon attention to a way of right action:

> After all, the real definition [of swaraj] will be determined by our action, the means we adopt to achieve the goal. If we would but concentrate upon the means, Swaraj will take care of itself. Our explorations should,

> therefore, take place in the direction of determining not the definition of an indefinable term like Swaraj but in discovering the ways and means.[1]

By the time these thoughts were recorded, in 1927, Gandhi had learned some hard lessons through his experiments with ways and means. The next twenty years were to prove no easier, but only to test, with increasing rigour, this satyagrahi in search of swaraj.

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1. Young India, 13 January 1927, III, p.26.

CHAPTER VII

SWARAJ THROUGH SATYAGRAHA

> The highest form of freedom carries with it the greatest measure of discipline... 1
>
> - Gandhi, 1926

Changing Emphases in Satyagraha: The Growth of the Constructive Programme

The heady optimism evident in Gandhi's writings of 1918 regarding the British Government's intentions toward the granting of Indian Independence was shattered soon after the War's ending. His faith in satyagraha, however, as a supreme method of political and social change strengthened with each obstacle it faced; this faith was not to be checked until early 1922, when the tragedy of Chauri Chaura forced a rigorous reassessment.

In 1920, Gandhi's confidence in his method and mission had reached a high peak; and on 4 September, at a Special Session of the Indian Congress in Calcutta, he presented for adoption his method of political action against the Government. This method, set forth in the "Resolution on Non-co-operation," signified far more than just another Congress attempt at redress of grievances.

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1. Young India, 3 June 1926, II, p.791.

It meant, at least for Gandhi, open rebellion;[1] and, thus, as he said in moving the resolution, the step marked "a definite change in the policy which the country has hitherto adopted for the vindication of the rights that belong to it, and its honour."[2] The resolution was approved; and with it, not only was a radical shift in national policy sanctioned, but a new leadership created. Gandhi became the mind behind the method, which embodied, he told the Congress, "the result of my many years practical experience in non-co-operation."[3]

Significant as this move by the Congress may have been, it only reflected the growth of a larger body of Indian public opinion. "I do not rely merely on the lawyer class," Gandhi said, "or highly educated men to carry out all the stages of non-co-operation. My hope is more with the masses..."[4] And Gandhi knew that this expectation was well founded. The one man who, before Gandhi, had combined mass appeal with power within the Congress had suddenly slipped from the scene: one month before the Special Calcutta Session B.G. Tilak, the "Lokamanya", had died,

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1. Gandhi wrote in Young India in 1921, "Lord Reading must understand that non-co-operators are at war with the Government. They have declared rebellion against it." In B.R. Nanda, op.cit., p.187.
2. Tendulkar, op.cit., II, p.11.
3. Ibid., p.11.
4. Ibid., p.15.

leaving the field open to Gandhi. The latter quickly gained a hold on both the Congress and the masses which Tilak had never approached.

Gandhi's immense appeal must be explained largely in those terms suggested by Vivekananda at the opening of the last chapter: the Mahatma learned to "speak of politics in India ... through the language of religion." Gandhi was neither a Moderate nor an Extremist; he was rather a towering figure who, with uncanny dexterity, fused the divergent traditions which he faced, and then formulated a language of his own through which he could communicate his ideas to the Indian people. Like a poet, he used his past with affection, drawing from the Indian classics old words — ahimsa, karmayoga, Ram Raj, sarvodaya — and charging them with fresh meaning, until they became symbols of both the past and future. None of Gandhi's terms, however, were infused with richer traditional Indian symbolism than the two key concepts of his thought, swaraj and satyagraha.

No one remained more sensitive than Gandhi to the crucial role of traditional Indian language and symbols in the national movement. When the members of Congress proposed, for purposes of greater clarity, to substitute the word "independence" for "swaraj" in future resolutions, Gandhi countered:

> I defy any one to give for independence a common Indian word intelligible to the masses. Our goal at any rate may be known by an indigenous word understood by the three hundred millions. And we have such a word in Swaraj first used in the name of the Nation by Dadabhai Naoroji. It is infinitely greater than and includes independence. It is a vital word. It has been sanctified by the noble sacrifices of thousands of Indians. It is a word which, if it has not penetrated the remotest corner of India, has at least got the largest currency of any similar word. It is a sacrilege to displace that word by a foreign importation of doubtful value. 1

Gandhi liked the word swaraj because it had traditional Indian roots, and he argued that because of this it possessed a unique meaning quite different from that of "independence". "The word Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which 'independence' often means."[2] Gandhi seldom missed an opportunity to evoke the religious symbolism explicit in the ideas of swaraj and satyagraha. "To the orthodox Hindus I need not point out the sovereign efficacy of tapasya. And satyagraha is nothing but tapasya for Truth."[3] And of swaraj he remarked, "Government over self is the truest Swaraj, it is synonymous with moksha or salvation ..."[4]

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1. Young India, 12 January 1928, III, p.547.
2. Gandhi, Young India, 19 March 1931, in India of My Dreams (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1959) p.7.
3. Young India, 14 August 1924, II, p.838.
4. Young India, 8 December 1920, I, p.886.

It seems paradoxical that while none of Gandhi's ideas were more liberally endowed with traditional symbolism than swaraj and satyagraha, none were more thoroughly misunderstood, both by his party and his people. The Congress followed him, on the whole, for his political experience and insights; the masses revered him as a Mahatma. Gandhi wanted understanding and appreciation of his thought, and not reverence, either of a saint or a politician. Yet, he must bear some of the responsibility for losing his countrymen along the way. The sheer vagueness and contradiction recurrent throughout his writing made it easier to accept him as a saint than to fathom the challenge posed by his demanding beliefs. Gandhi saw no harm in self-contradiction: life was a series of experiments, and any principle might change if Truth so dictated. Truth, moreover, had a habit of positing extraordinarily high moral standards; and for those who had neither conducted the experiments, nor acquired an unshakeable faith in the premises behind them, Gandhi's ideas posed formidable demands. One might worship him from afar as a Mahatma; or, as the alternative which most Congressmen took, accept his judgements as "policy" but not as a "creed". Neither path was that of the satyagrahi; nor could either lead to what Gandhi called swaraj. Instead, each undermined Gandhi's thought and message, for neither could give him support

when the going became rough. At the very end, when it was indeed the roughest, Gandhi stood, tragically, alone; he now fully realised his failure to persuade both the Congress leadership and the Indian people of the central meaning of his philosophy. "Intoxicated by my success in South Africa," he admitted in 1947, "I came to India. Here too the struggle bore fruit. But I have now realized that it was not based on non-violence of the brave. If I had known so then, I would not have launched the struggle."[1] It is remarkable that an individual of Gandhi's insight did not appreciate this sooner. For indications of critical differences between his beliefs and those of the Congress leaders appear very early during his public career in India. Chief among these differences was that which concerned method; early evidence of this occurs in Gandhi's controversy with Tilak a few months before the latter's death.

In 1920, when Gandhi outlined his programme of total non-co-operation with the Government, several key Congress leaders, Tilak and C.R. Das among them, objected strongly to a boycott of the Government councils. They argued that Indian nationalists should seek entry to these councils, and then "wreck them from within." Gandhi, however, contended that it would be untruthful and therefore morally

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1. Gandhi, Harijan, 27 July 1947, in Pyarelal, op.cit., II, p.315.

wrong to enter the councils under false pretences; such a deceptive move, even if politically advantageous, could only have undesirable consequences from an ethical point of view. This particular dispute reflected a broader area of disagreement on the question of the relation of means to ends, and of morality to politics. The crux of this difference came to light in the columns of Young India, in a revealing exchange of views between Gandhi and Tilak.

Gandhi began the discussion with a brief criticism of Tilak's view of politics: "L. Tilak represents a definite school of thought of which he makes no secret. He considers that everything is fair in politics. We have joined issue with him in that conception of political life... We believe that nothing but the strictest adherence to honesty, fair play and charity can advance the true interests of the country."[1] Tilak immediately took issue with the remark and, in a letter to Young India, replied:

> I am sorry to see that in your article on 'Reform Resolution' in the last issue, you have represented me as holding that I considered 'everything fair in politics'. I write this to you to say that my view is not correctly represented herein. Politics is a game of worldly people, and not of Sahdus, and instead of the maxim 'akkhodhenajine kkhodham'[2] as

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1. Young India, 14 January 1920, I, pp.828-29.
2. akkodhena jine kodham: "Overcome anger by loving kindness, evil by good." In the Dhammapada, trans. Narada Maha Tera (Calcutta: Maha Bodhi Society of India, 1952) p.165.

preached by Buddha, I prefer to rely on the maxim of Shri Krishna "ye gatthaa maam prapadyamthe thaamsthatthaiva bhajaamyaham.'[1] That explains the whole difference and also the meaning of my phrase 'responsive co-operation'. Both methods are equally honest and righteous but the one is more suited to this world than the other.[2]

Gandhi answered:

I naturally feel the greatest diffidence about joining issue with the Lokamanya in matters involving questions of interpretation of religious works. But there are things in or about which instinct transcends even interpretation. For me there is no conflict between the two texts quoted by the Lokamanya. The Buddhist text lays down an eternal principle. The text from the Bhagvad Gita shows to me how the principle of conquering hate by love, untruth by truth, can and must be applied. If it be true that God metes out the same measure to us that we mete out to others, it follows that if we would escape condign punishment, we may out-return anger for anger but gentleness even against anger. And this is the law not for the unworldly but essentially for the worldly. With deference to the Lokamanya, I venture to say that it betrays mental laziness to think that the world is not for Sahdus. The epitome of all religions is to promote Purushartha, and Purushartha is nothing but a desperate attempt to become Sahdu, i.e., to become gentleman in every sense of the term.

Finally, when I wrote the sentence about 'everything being fair in politics' according to the Lokamanya's creed, I had in mind his oft-repeated quotation 'shaddham prathi shaddhyam.'[3] To me it enunciates bad law ...

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1. yeyatha mam prapadyamte tams tathaiva bhajamy aham: "In whatsoever way any come to Me, In that same way I grant them favour." In the Bhagavad Gita, (IV,11) trans. by F. Edgerton (New York: Harper, 1964) p.24.
2. Young India, 28 January 1920, I, p.784.
3. "Tit for Tat".

> In any case, I pit the experience of a third of a century against the doctrine underlying 'shaddham prati shaddhyam.' The true law is 'shaddham pratyapi satyam.'[1]

Tilak and Gandhi shared several aims and attributes in common, and no one was quicker to observe these similarities than Gandhi himself.[2] Nor was Gandhi sparing in his praise of Tilak's contribution to the Independence movement.[3] Yet the difference between them remained fundamental; and Gandhi concluded their controversy with the laconic remark: "I am conscious that my method is not Mr. Tilak's method."[4]

This contrast in method, arising from a different way of looking at the relation of morality to politics, corresponded with a different understanding of the meaning of swaraj. Tilak defined swaraj as political independence, and demanded, as a minimum, home-rule for India similar to that of other colonies within the Empire. He used the term swaraj to exploit its traditional overtones; but as a concept it remained, for him, synonymous with the Western idea of political independence. To many Congressmen, this view of swaraj seemed clear, direct, and attainable. When Gandhi assumed leadership, however, swaraj could no longer be understood in these simple terms. Nehru observed that in

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1. "Do only that which is truthful." Ibid., I, pp.784-5.
2. Young India, 13 July 1921, I, pp.783-85.
3. Young India, 4 August 1920, I, pp.788-91.
4. Young India, 13 July 1921, I, p.784.

1920, when Gandhi spoke of swaraj, he was "delightfully vague on the subject."[1] Other Congressmen, though, were not delighted with Gandhi's vagueness, and they continued to regard swaraj as nothing more than the replacement of British Raj by Congress Raj. Gandhi contributed to this misunderstanding of his position. In 1920, when he assumed leadership of the Congress, he promised "swaraj in one year"; this proclamation was understandably met with a wild burst of enthusiasm among those thirsting for national independence. Early the following year, Gandhi carefully set down his "conditions of swaraj" which made it clear that a considerable social transformation would have to occur before Indians could expect to win swaraj.[2] Gandhi should have foreseen the confusion that would arise from presenting such a complex and formidable goal in the form of a simple, deceptive slogan.

As Gandhi's thought and experience mature, however, all mention of "swaraj in one year" vanishes. Instead, an increasing emphasis falls upon the indissoluble relationship between swaraj and the Constructive Programme. Three main aspects of that programme were singled out as particularly vital: Hindu-Muslim unity, the abolition of untouchability,

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1. B.R. Nanda, op.cit., quoting Nehru, p.205.
2. Young India, 23 February 1921, I, pp.871-72.

and the use of khaddar (home-spun cloth) as well as the charkha (spinning-wheel). The achievement, through non-violent means, of this "three point programme" constituted the essence of swaraj. Gandhi wrote in November 1921:

> Swaraj does consist in the change of government and its real control by the people, but that would be merely the form. The substance that I am hankering after is a definite acceptance of the means and, therefore, a real change of heart on the part of the people. I am certain that it does not require ages for Hindus to discard the error of untouchability, for Hindus and Musalmans to shed enmity and accept heart friendship as an eternal factor of national life, for all to adopt the charkha as the only universal means of attaining India's economic salvation and finally for all to believe that India's freedom lies only through non-violence, and no other method. Definite, intelligent and free adoption by the nation of this programme, I hold, as the attainment of the substance. The symbol, the transfer of power, is sure to follow, even as the seed truly laid must develop into a tree.[1]

This emphasis upon the Constructive Programme did not mean an abandonment of civil disobedience as an integral form of satyagraha. Gandhi's faith in mass civil disobedience, however, was considerably shaken in 1922 by several acts of violence; no incident distressed him more and forced a harder re-examination of satyagraha than that of Chauri Chaura.

In December 1921 and January 1922, Government action against the campaign of non-co-operation intensified;

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1. Young India, 17 November 1921, I, pp.793-94.

thirty thousand non-co-operators were imprisoned, volunteer organizations became illegal, and public meetings were dispersed. The National Congress convened at Ahmedabad in December 1921; Gandhi was appointed its sole executive authority, and he was pressed by various members to launch mass civil disobedience.[1] He realized that no weapon of satyagraha was more dangerous than this; yet he also believed it to be the duty of an individual to resist unjust rule. "I wish I could persuade everybody," he wrote on 5 January 1922, "that Civil Disobedience is the inherent right of the citizen ... At the same time that the right of Civil Disobedience is insisted upon, its use must be guarded by all conceivable restrictions. Every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness."[2] On 1 February, he made the decision to begin mass civil disobedience in the single district of Bardoli; if it succeeded there, he would extend it throughout India. He immediately communicated this to Lord Reading the Viceroy, and warned him that unless the Government freed the non-co-operators and lifted restrictions on the Press, the action would be taken.[3]

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1. B.R. Nanda, op.cit., p.229.
2. Young India, 5 January 1922, I, pp.943-44.
3. B.R. Nanda, op.cit., p.230.

Gandhi's demands were rejected, and Bardoli prepared for mass civil disobedience.

On 5 February, a procession of nationalists formed in Chauri Chaura, a village in Uttar Pradesh; a number of constables attempted to intervene, and when the demonstrators turned on them they opened fire. Their ammunition soon became exhausted and they withdrew to a thana; the crowd set fire to the building, and twenty-two officers were subsequently burnt alive and hacked to death in the midst of the mob's fury.[1] Gandhi received the news on 8 February and his reaction was immediate. He called a meeting of the Congress Working Committee and advised cancellation of civil disobedience; they disagreed with him, but his will prevailed. He then imposed upon himself a five days' fast as a penance for the violence. When nationalists throughout the country rebuked him for his decision to call off the campaign he replied, "God spoke clearly through Chauri Chaura."

> No provocation can possibly justify the brutal murder of men who had been rendered defenceless and had virtually thrown themselves on the mercy of the mob. And when India claims to be non-violent and hopes to mount the throne of Liberty through non-violent means, mob-violence even in answer to grave provocation is a bad augury.

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1. Tendulkar, op.cit., II, p.82.

> The tragedy of Chauri Chaura is really the indexfinger. It shows the way India may easily go, if drastic precautions be not taken. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence, it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps and re-establish an atmosphere of peace, re-arrange our programme and not think of starting mass Civil Disobedience until we are sure of peace being retained in spite of mass Civil Disobedience being started and in spite of Government provocation.[1]

"We dare not enter the kingdom of Liberty," Gandhi concluded in this article entitled "The Crime of Chauri Chaura", "with mere lip homage to Truth and Non-Violence."[2]

February 1922 was not the last time that Gandhi brandished the weapon of civil disobedience; but his use of it, after this time, became severely restricted, and generally inclined toward the exercise of individual, rather than mass, action. Henceforth, Gandhi began fully to realize the difficult and manifold nature of the task which he had undertaken; he turned increasingly to other aspects of satyagraha in his quest for swaraj. "The pilgrimage to Swaraj," he concluded in 1925, "is a painful climb."[3]

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1. Young India, 16 February 1922, I, pp.994, 997.
2. Ibid., p.998.
3. Young India, 21 May 1925, II, pp.928-29.

"The Three Pillars of Swaraj"

"The sooner it is recognized," Gandhi wrote in 1928, "that many of our social evils impede our march towards Swaraj, the greater will be our progress towards our cherished goal. To postpone social reform till after the attainment of Swaraj is not to know the meaning of Swaraj."[1] Foremost among the aims of social reform were those which Gandhi called "the three pillars of Swaraj": Hindu-Muslim unity, the abolition of untouchability and the uplift of India's villages.[2] The Constructive Programme, launched to fulfill these three aims, represented to Gandhi the way in which swaraj may best be attained through satyagraha. As a method of social reform the Constructive Programme illustrates the conceptual relationship in Gandhi's thought between freedom and social harmony. This relationship recalls the ideas of Vivekananda and Aurobindo; but it differs from them in its persistent attempt to resolve particular social issues, to heal divisions which had historically torn Indian society. A right approach to the three main aims of the Constructive Programme would bring, Gandhi believed, not only a free, but a harmonious social order. His campaign against

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1. Young India, 28 June 1928, III, p.772.
2. Gandhi, Young India, 24 November 1927 in Hindu Dharma, p.331.

untouchability was, above all, a movement to create a common feeling among castes and untouchables; his struggle for Hindu-Muslim unity sought a harmony of religious sympathies; and his attempt to advance the use of khaddar and the spinning wheel was an effort at bridging the gulf between groups of educated Indians and the majority in the villages. Gandhi forever remained an apostle of harmony, a devotee of compromise and co-operation. From a lesson learned early in his South African experience, he concluded, "All my life through, the very insistence on truth has taught me to appreciate the beauty of compromise. I saw in later life that this spirit was an essential part of satyagraha."[1] It is difficult to pinpoint any major phase of Gandhi's public life that was not involved with the reconciliation of parties, the integration of apparently divergent interests. The supreme example of this single-minded effort to restore harmony to a country torn by schism is found in that endeavour which consumed most of his life, the Constructive Programme.

Gandhi's personal objection to untouchability dated back to a childhood experience;[2] and, in South Africa, he often expressed his abhorrence of the institution.[3]

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1. Gandhi, Autobiography, p.148.
2. Tendulkar, op.cit., I, p.27.
3. Gandhi, Works, IV, p.430 and VI, p.470.

Not until his arrival in India, though, in 1915, does he emphasize it as a major obstacle to the country's growth. In a speech of early 1916, he condemned untouchability in the strongest possible terms as "an ineffaceable blot that Hinduism today carries with it ... This miserable, wretched, enslaving spirit of untouchableness." "It is, to my mind, a curse that has come to us, and as long as that curse remains with us, so long I think we are bound to consider that every affliction that we labour under in this sacred land is a fit and proper punishment for this great and indelible crime that we are committing."[1] Gandhi soon came to see the fight against untouchability as an integral part of satyagraha, and its resolution as a prerequisite for swaraj. This necessary relationship of swaraj to the abolition of untouchability which Gandhi saw was seldom, however, seen by others. Thus one correspondent wrote to Young India:

> I am unable to understand the relation between the existence of this evil and the establishment of Swaraj. After all, 'unapproachability' is only one of the many evils of the Hindu society — perhaps a greater evil — and as long as society exists similar evils do exist, as no society is free from evils. How is this an impediment to the obtaining of Swaraj and why do you make its removal a condition precedent to our fitness for Swaraj? Is it not possible for this to be set right when Swaraj is obtained, if not voluntarily, at least by legislation?[2]

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1. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, p.387.
2. Young India, 12 June 1924, II, p.601.

Gandhi replied:

> Swaraj for me means freedom for the meanest of our countrymen. If the lot of the Panchama is not improved when we are all suffering, it is not likely to be better under the intoxication of Swaraj. If it is necessary for us to buy peace with the Mussalmans as a condition of Swaraj, it is equally necessary for us to give peace to the Panchama before we can with any show of justice or self-respect talk of Swaraj. I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange 'king log for king stork.' Hence for me the movement of Swaraj is a movement of self-purification.[1]

These last few sentences contain a vital element of Gandhi's conception of freedom: the conviction that tyranny over another inevitably corrupts the character of the tyrant, and so enslaves the tyrant himself. "We have become 'pariahs of the Empire' because we have created 'pariahs' in our midst. The slaveowner is always more hurt than the slave. We shall be unfit to gain Swaraj so long as we would keep in bondage a fifth of the population of Hindustan."[2] Again, speaking in 1928 on the reform of untouchability he asked, "Shall we not have the vision to see that in suppressing a sixth (or whatever the number) of ourselves, we have depressed ourselves? No man takes another down a pit without descending into it himself and

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1. Ibid., pp.601-2.
2. Young India, 24 November 1920, I, p.643.

sinning in the bargain. It is not the suppressed that sin. It is the suppressor who has to answer for his crime against those whom he suppresses."[1]

Despite these arguments, many Congressmen remained unconvinced of the connection between swaraj and the abolition of untouchability. At the Forty-First Congress of 1926, Mr. S. Srinivasa Aiyengar delivered the Presidential Address; after paying high tribute to Gandhi's thought, he turned to the gospel of swaraj:

> Our foremost duty is to keep constantly before our eyes the vision of swaraj, what it is, what it requires of us, and what it will not permit us. It means nothing less than that the Congress should have the fullest control over the people and should have a steadily increasing number of workers knit together in bonds of unshakeable loyalty and perfect understanding. It is only in proportion as the control of the Congress over the people increases in area and in intensity we can obtain or establish swaraj.[2]

This view of swaraj lay outside the main stream of Gandhi's thought, though he might have accepted it within a larger context. Aiyengar, however, then moved on to ideas decidedly at variance with Gandhi's position. He described the use of khaddar and the abolition of untouchability as "vital aspects of our national movement."[3] But, he

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1. Young India, 29 March 1928, III, p.673.
2. Congress Presidential Addresses, 1911-1934, 2nd series (Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1937) pp.800-1.
3. Ibid., p.804.

contended, "Neither foreign nor domestic critics are right when they assert that untouchability is a formidable obstacle for swaraj, or that its removal will automatically bring about swaraj. We cannot wait for swaraj till it is removed anymore than we can wait till caste is abolished... I would deprecate the iterated rhetorical stress on untouchability as a serious impediment to swaraj."[1] Gandhi was quick to note this comment on untouchability in Aiyengar's address, and he soon answered it in Young India:

> There is, too, confusion regarding Swaraj. The term Swaraj has many meanings. When Sjt. Iyengar says that removal of untouchability has nothing to do with Swaraj, I presume he means that its existence can be no hindrance to constitutional advance. It can surely have nothing to do with dyarchy or greater and effective powers being given the legislatures....
>
> Real organic Swaraj is a different question. That freedom which is associated with the term Swaraj in the popular mind is no doubt unattainable without not only the removal of untouchability and the promotion of heart unity between the different sections but also without removing many other social evils that can be easily named. That inward growth which must never stop we have come to understand by the comprehensive term Swaraj. And that Swaraj cannot be had so long as walls of prejudice, passion and superstition continue to stifle the growth of that stately oak.[2]

This was the aspect of untouchability that Gandhi disliked

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1. Ibid., pp.806-07.
2. Young India, 10 March 1927, III, pp.107-08.

most: the "walls of prejudice, passion and superstition" that it created, prohibiting "promotion of heart unity between the different sections." Gandhi uses, for the first time in this passage, the term "organic Swaraj" and this holds a special significance: it suggests a freedom which seeks to include a sense of social harmony. "Organic" as opposed to "constitutional" or "parliamentary" swaraj included individual civil liberty and national independence, but it also sought to go beyond these to a realization of "heart unity."

Gandhi wanted, then, to establish an organic swaraj, a solid spirit of social unity, in three major areas of Indian society: among the untouchables and the various castes; between Hindus and Muslims; and, finally, he wished to overcome the considerable gap that had grown between the rural, traditional, largely illiterate villagers, on the one hand, and the urban, Westernized, educated classes on the other. Gandhi interpreted this last aspect of social separateness as another form of untouchability. "To me, the campaign against untouchability has begun to imply ever so much more than the eradication of the ceremonial untouchability of those who are labelled untouchables. For the city dweller, the villages have become untouchables."[1]

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1. Tendulkar, op.cit., IV, p.2.

Gandhi continually emphasized the necessity for identification with the villagers, who represented the masses of India, that their attitudes might be understood and their needs met.

> We must first come in living touch with them [the masses] by working for them and in their midst. We must share their sorrows, understand their difficulties and anticipate their wants. With the pariahs we must be pariahs and see how we feel to clean the closets of the upper classes and have the remains of their table thrown at us. We must see how we like being in the boxes, miscalled houses, of the labourers of Bombay. We must identify ourselves with the villagers who toil under the hot sun beating on their bent backs and see how we would like to drink water from the pool in which the villagers bathe, wash their cloths and pots and in which their cattle drink and roll. Then and not till then shall we truly represent the masses and they will, as surely as I am writing this, respond to every call. 'We cannot all do this, and if we are to do this, good-bye to Swaraj for a thousand years and more,' some will say. I shall sympathise with the objection. But I do claim that some of us at least will have to go through the agony and out of it only will a nation full, vigorous and free be born.[1]

This call for service did not begin in modern India with Gandhi. He had said that he wished to serve India's villagers "because I recognize no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions ... and I worship the God that is Truth or Truth which is God through the service of these millions."[2] Vivekananda,

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1. Young India, 11 September 1924, II, pp.378-79.
2. Tendulkar, op.cit., V, p.58.

though, had set forth precisely the same idea a generation earlier; even the word which Gandhi used, Daridranarayan, to mean the divinity of the masses, had been used by Vivekananda; Gandhi had taken the word from C.R. Das.[1] But Gandhi did not derive this gospel of service exclusively from Das or Vivekananda; he had found it in numerous sources: the Sermon on the Mount, Tolstoy, texts and saints of the Indian tradition, and in the recollection of simple childhood experiences. Gandhi imbibed these influences, and directed the lessons he learned toward problems of the Indian villager.

Gandhi, morever, was not the only major political leader of his time to call attention to the crucial importance of the Indian villages. C.R. Das in his Congress Presidential Address of 1922 had urged, as a requisite of Swaraj, the "organization of village life and the practical autonomy of small local centres." Village communities must not exist as "disconnected units" but rather be "held together by a system of co-operation and integration." "I maintain that real Swaraj," Das declared, "can only be attained by vesting the power of Government in these small local centres"; and he suggested that the Congress "draw

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1. Gandhi, Young India, 4 April 1929, cited in V.P. Varma, The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvodaya (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1959) p.59.

up a scheme of Government" based on this principle."[1] As a result of this recommendation, an Outline Scheme of Swaraj was drafted by C.R. Das and Bhagavan Das,[2] and presented to the Congress in early 1923. This plan urged the creation, after independence was granted, of a highly decentralized form of government, "a maximum of local autonomy," and "a minimum of control by higher centres."[3] The organ of administration would be the panchayat, organized into village, town, district, provincial, and All-India units of government.[4] The purpose behind this scheme was the uplift of India's villages; and "the idea underlying this condition is that which has been discussed and emphasized before, the idea of spiritualizing politics by changing the whole culture and civilisation of society from its present mercenary to a missionary basis...."[5] Gandhi, then, was not unique among Congress leaders in his approach to the villages. His contribution lies first, in the sustained emphasis which he gave to this aspect of his Constructive Programme, and second, in his use of traditional symbols and concepts to further understanding of a problem

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1. C.R. Das, Freedom Through Disobedience, Presidential Address at 37th Indian National Congress (Madras: Arka, 1922) p.40.
2. Bhagavan Das, Ancient versus Modern Scientific Socialism (Madras: Theosophical Pub. House, 1934) p.135.
3. C.R. Das, Outline Scheme of Swaraj, National Convention Memoranda, No.2 (Madras: Besant Press, 1923) p.3.
4. Ibid., p.4.
5. Ibid., p.27.

that had psychological as well as political and economic roots.

Vivekananda had perceived that which most early Congress Moderates had ignored: not only that traditional Indian language and symbols were needed to involve the people in the national movement, but also that the educated had to overcome a substantial psychological barrier to achieve rapport with the masses. Gandhi directed his efforts toward both aspects of this problem. He approached the villagers through the use of Indian tradition; the endless plea for village sanitation, personal hygiene, and basic education came to them this time, not from just another Westernized social reformer, but from a Mahatma. Gandhi remained equally concerned, however, with his other adversary, the educated Westernized Indians. No single major proposal that Gandhi made during his period of Congress leadership induced greater ridicule than that concerning the use of the spinning wheel and the wearing of khaddar. Gandhi asked Congressmen to wear the homespun cloth and to devote a certain amount of time each day to the spinning of yarn. The proposal was set forth in Congress resolutions, and many members paid lip service to it; few seemed to appreciate Gandhi's purposes in advocating it.

"I can only think of spinning," Gandhi wrote, "as the fittest and most acceptable sacrificial body labour. I cannot imagine anything nobler or more national than that, for we should all do the labour that the poor must do and thus identify ourselves with them and through them with all mankind."[1] The wearing of khaddar by each Indian Gandhi felt to be a privilege which should "make him proud of his identity with every drop of the ocean of Indian humanity."[2] The spinning wheel was seen as "the cement to bind the masses to us national servants,"[3] the instrument for "creating an indissoluble bond between the rich and poor,"[4] and "the symbol of social service of the highest order."[5] Few examples illustrate better than the spinning wheel Gandhi's reliance upon the force of a symbol.

"Satyagraha," Gandhi wrote in 1919, "is like a banyan tree with innumerable branches ... Satya and ahimsa together make the parent trunk from which all innumerable branches shoot out."[6] Non-violence remained an essential element of satyagraha, and the Constructive Programme, one of its "innumerable branches," relied solely upon the use of non-violent means for the creation of a social and

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1. Young India, 20 October 1921, I, p.501.
2. Tendulkar, op.cit., VI, p.25.
3. Young India, 23 April 1925, II, p.275.
4. Young India, 17 September 1925, II, p.1109.
5. Young India, 23 April 1925, II, p.275.
6. Tendulkar, op.cit., I, pp.261-62.

political revolution in India. The right means could only be non-violent; only these would produce Gandhi's ideal of a non-violent social order. "They say 'means are after all means.' I would say 'means are after all everything.' As the means so the end. Violent means will give violent Swaraj."[1] Gandhi's belief in ahimsa which he variously translated as "love" and "charity" as well as "non-violence", was for him a religious persuasion, and a necessary element in his quest for self-realisation. "My uniform experience has convinced me,"he concludes in his Autobiography, "that there is no other God than Truth. And if every page of these chapters does not proclaim to the reader that the only means for the realisation of Truth is Ahimsa, I shall deem all my labour in writing these chapters to have been in vain ... this much I can say with assurance, as a result of all my experiments, that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realisation of Ahimsa."[2] Gandhi believed that non-violent means were not only truthful but efficacious. "You need not be afraid," he once replied to an Indian terrorist who had challenged the workability of his method, "that the method of non-violence is a slow long drawn out process.

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1. Young India, 17 July 1924, II, p.364.
2. Gandhi, Autobiography, pp.503-04.

It is the swiftest the world has seen, for it is the surest. You will see that it will overtake the revolutionaries whom you imagine I have misjudged."[1]

The most severe test of Gandhi's ahimsa, indeed of satyagraha itself, came at the end of his life with the complete rupture of Hindu-Muslim relations. The problem of Hindu-Muslim friction had always been, for him, one more manifestation of the evil of untouchability. "When we learn to regard these five to six crores of outcastes as our own," he wrote in 1926, "we shall learn the rudiments of what it is to be one people. That one act of cleansing will probably solve also the Hindu-Muslim question. For in it too the corrosive poison of untouchability is consciously or unconsciously working its way."[2] "The corrosive poison" of this form of untouchability, however, was not checked by the effect of Gandhi's Constructive Programme; it ultimately created a state of violent social discord which he had not anticipated. Another weapon in the satyagraha arsenal was needed, and the concluding section of this chapter will consider how Gandhi used that weapon in his struggle for communal harmony. The analysis will be of a single instance of satyagraha: Gandhi's Calcutta Fast for Hindu-Muslim Unity of September, 1947.

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1. Young India, 30 April 1925, II, p.916.
2. Young India, 25 March 1926, II, p.750.

The Nature of Satyagraha : A Test Case

> I had realized early enough in South Africa that there was no genuine friendship between the Hindus and the Musalmans. I never missed a single opportunity to remove obstacles in the way of unity. It was not in my nature to placate anyone by adulation, or at the cost of self-respect. But my South African experiences had convinced me that it would be on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity that my Ahimsa would be put to its severest test, and that the question presented the widest field for my experiments in Ahimsa. The conviction is still there.[1]

This is Gandhi, writing in 1927, in his Autobiography, under the title, "Passion for Unity". In South Africa, Gandhi had written forcefully both in Indian Opinion and in Hind Swaraj on behalf of Hindu-Muslim unity;[2] when he returned to India in 1915, he recognized the problem as a major national issue, and made its resolution a prerequisite for swaraj. His Gujarat Address urges full use of satyagraha to "settle the Hindu-Mohammedan problem."[3] In 1919, he decided to make a total commitment to Muslim interests through the Khilafat issue. This decision, which involved the Congress in a futile cause, is explicable only in terms of Gandhi's single-minded desire to forge the interests of the two religious communities together. "What then does the Hindu-Mohammedan Unity

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1. Gandhi, Autobiography, p.441.
2. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, pp.48-54.
3. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, p.421.

consist in and how can it be best promoted?" he asked in 1920. "The answer is simple. It consists in our having a common purpose, a common goal and common sorrows. It is best promoted by co-operating to reach the common goal, by sharing one another's sorrows and by mutual toleration.... Today seeing that the Mahomedans are deeply touched on the question of Khilafat and their case is just, nothing can be so powerful for winning Mahomedan friendship for the Hindu as to give his wholehearted support to the Mahomedan claim."[1] During this time of the Khilafat question, the columns of Young India abound with comments on the Hindu-Muslim problem, insisting that swaraj cannot come without religious unity. "The union that we want is not a patched up thing but a union of hearts based upon a definite recognition of the indubitable proposition that Swaraj for India must be an impossible dream without an indissoluble union between the Hindus and the Muslims of India."[2] After the abortive collapse of the Khilafat agitation, Gandhi continued to stress the urgency of a reconciliation between the two communities. Often he devoted issues of Young India to the publication of letters from Hindu and Muslim correspondents which were filled with mutual recrimination:

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1. Young India, 25 February 1920, I, pp.399-400.
2. Young India, 6 October 1920, I, p.404.

forced conversion of Hindu women; desecration of Muslim mosques; wanton slaughter of cows by Muslims; deliberate disruption of Muslim religious services by Hindus; fanaticism followed by fanatical retaliation. Gandhi replied to each charge, urging patience, understanding, conciliation and forgiveness.

In early September, 1924, a sudden increase in communal violence occurred. Gandhi warned that "The question of Hindu-Muslim Unity is getting more serious everyday,"[1] and he pleaded for sanity. But the only reply to his plea was a major riot at Kohat; thirty-six people were killed and one hundred and forty-five were wounded. Gandhi said, "The news from Kohat set the smouldering mass aflame. Something has got to be done."[2] He soon decided on a remedy; on 18 September he issued a statement from the house of a Muslim friend in Delhi: "The recent events have proved unbearable for me. My helplessness is still more unbearable. My religion teaches me that whenever there is distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray.... I am therefore imposing upon myself a fast of twenty-one days commencing from today."[3]

One immediate consequence of Gandhi's decision was

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1. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, p.993.
2. Tendulkar, op.cit., II, p.148.
3. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, p.999.

a Unity Conference in Delhi, presided over by Motilal Nehru and attended by 300 delegates representing "almost every school of thought in the country."[1] The Conference passed resolutions, communal violence subsided, and Gandhi after three weeks broke his fast. The results of this fast, however, are less important than the motives behind it; and an understanding of these involves some acquaintance with Gandhi's personal belief in the merit of fasting, as well as with his use of fasting as an instrument of social reform. During his Delhi fast of 1924, Gandhi said, "This fast is but to purify myself, to strengthen myself."[2] This conviction, that self-suffering imposed by fasting might increase one's self-discipline and spiritual insight is a dominant aspect of Indian traditional belief. The Vaishya community of Kathiawar, into which Gandhi was born, is closely associated with the Jain religion; and one leading British historian has recently stressed Gandhi's indebtedness to the Jains, for whom non-violence is a cardinal religious tenet.[3] Jain ascetics are noted, also, for their rigorous pursuit of salvation through penance and prolonged fasting.[4] Gandhi himself acknowledges the early and

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1. Tendulkar, op.cit., II, p.153.
2. Ibid., p.153.
3. Percival Spear, op.cit., pp.61, 357.
4. A.L. Basham, The Wonder That was India, p.292 and de Bary, Sources of Indian Tradition, p.50.

profound influence which Rajchandbhai, a Jain religious mystic, exerted upon him; it was he who persuaded Gandhi of the merits of brahmacharya, and thus prompted Gandhi's life-long commitment to a severe form of self-restraint and denial.[1] Early in his life, Gandhi relates in his Autobiography, he came to believe that fasting, both "physical" and "mental", were essential for an individual's self-realization.[2]

This deep religious belief in fasting corresponded with a full awareness of the force that a fast might exert as an instrument of social reform. Gandhi referred to the technique of fasting as a "fiery weapon";[3] he regarded it as "an integral part of the satyagraha programme, and it is the greatest and most effective weapon in its armoury...."[4] The efficacy of fasting emerged largely from its reliance on the greater power of non-violence. "Non-violence in its positive aspect as benevolence ... is the greatest force because of the limitless scope it affords for self-suffering without causing or intending any physical or material injury to the wrong-doer. The object always is to evoke the best

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1. Gandhi, Autobiography, pp.204-05.
2. Ibid., p.332.
3. Gandhi, Harijan, 13 October 1940 in N.K. Bose, Studies in Gandhism (Calcutta: Indian Ass. Pub. Co., 1947) p.157.
4. Gandhi, Harijan, 26 July 1942, in N.K. Bose, pp.156-7.

in him. Self-suffering is an appeal to his better nature, as retaliation is to his baser. Fasting under proper circumstances is such an appeal par excellence."[1] The fast worked in Gandhi's view because it could, through the non-violent self-sacrifice of one individual, "evoke the best" in an adversary. If, though, the fast possessed this considerable power, it also had definite limitations. First, Gandhi emphasized that it should only be used as a last resort, when all other branches of satyagraha had failed.[2] A fast indicated a desperate attempt at sudden conversion; it could never replace the Constructive Programme as the foundation of satyagraha, but only complement that Programme when an extreme situation prevailed. Second, fasts should only be attempted by a genuine satyagrahi, an individual free from selfishness, anger or impatience, and firmly committed to non-violence.[3] As an instrument of reform the fast is morally neutral; thus the motive of the person using it becomes all-important.[4] Apart from the aim of self-purification, a satyagrahi fasts to gain the repentance of others for wrongs they have committed, to awaken their consciences and to induce them to re-examine their own positions.[5] Thus the fast must always be undertaken for the

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1. Ibid., p.157.
2. Gandhi, Harijan, 21 April 1946 in India of My Dreams, p.87.
3. Ibid., pp.86-7.
4. Ibid., p.87.
5. Pyarelal, op.cit., II, p.738.

reform of the adversary and not for extorting advantages from him. Gandhi attaches an important condition to the fast; he says that the satyagrahi should always fast against a "lover", that is, one who shares an underlying sympathy with his aim.[1] This condition is significant for at least two reasons. On the one hand, it indicates Gandhi's awareness of the fast's inherent limitation. He concedes that "You cannot fast against a tyrant ... I will not fast to reform, say, General Dyer who not only does not love me, but who regards himself as my enemy."[2] On the other hand, the condition reflects Gandhi's insight into the real source of the fast's power: in his case, the sympathy of the Indian people. Gandhi's fasts worked most effectively when waged against his own countrymen: some responded to the call of "Gandhiji" a leader whom they adored; others revered him, and followed him, as the Mahatma, a holy ascetic who symbolized the highest attainments of their religious traditions. Gandhi was fully aware of this source of his power. As a Hindu, he knew intuitively through which symbols, imagery, language and behaviour he could communicate with that community; but he was also cognizant of those

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1. Young India, 1 May 1924, II, pp.825-26.
2. Ibid., p.825.

religious associations which held meaning for the Muslims.[1] The fast had the value of appealing to both Hindus and Muslims; and, in the hands of Gandhi, both because of his own strong personal convictions, and also because of the traditional religious beliefs of his fellow Indians, it became a weapon of considerable power. With the Partition of India, the extreme situation for which the fast was designed suddenly emerged; Gandhi summoned its powers to meet a challenge which, forty years earlier, he had foreseen as posing the ultimate test of satyagraha.

"If we could transform Calcutta," Gandhi mused to a fellow Constructive Worker in 1928, "we should transform the whole of India."[2] Almost twenty years later, Gandhi arrived in Calcutta with precisely this purpose: the transformation of the whole of India by bringing peace to its great strife-torn city. Calcutta was not the only area of turmoil in 1947: the Punjab had unparalleled communal rioting, and Gandhi himself had already spent several months

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1. During Gandhi's 1924 fast, a Muslim friend, Maulana Shaukat Ali tried to persuade Gandhi to terminate it. Gandhi replied, "Fasting and prayer are common injunctions in my religion. But I know of this sort of penance even in Islam. In the life of the Prophet I have read that the Prophet often fasted and prayed ... Even at this moment I see before me the picture of the Prophet thus fasting and praying ... I am speaking to you as though I was a Musslaman, because I have cultivated that respect for Islam which you have for it." In Young India, II, pp.106-07.
2. Young India, 13 December 1928, III, p.998.

quieting Noakhali and Bihar. Calcutta, though, had experienced more than its gruesome share of communal violence; for it was here that the cauldron had first boiled over. In July, 1946 Jinnah's growing suspicion of both the British Cabinet Mission and the Indian Congress erupted; he accused the British of bad faith and of "playing into the hands of the Congress." The only alternative open to the Muslim League was to seize a fresh initiative: a "Direct Action Day" was set for 16 August, to demonstrate en masse for the creation of Pakistan.[1] 16 August became the day of the "Great Calcutta Killing". Communal riots raged for four days and official estimates placed casualties at 4,000 killed and 10,000 injured.[2] "No communal riot in British-Indian history had ever reached such dimensions. It was in fact the beginning of civil war in an odious and horrible form."[3] The Calcutta slaughter set off a grim chain reaction: in late August, the Muslim majority of Noakhali retaliated against the Hindus for the Calcutta killings; in late October, the Hindus then wreaked their vengeance in Bihar; the worst reaction of all, though, occurred in the Punjab.

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1. P. Spear, op.cit., pp.414-16, 466 and V.P. Menon, The Transfer of Power in India (London: Longmans, 1957) pp.282-84.
2. P. Spear, op.cit., p.466.
3. Ibid., p.415.

> By the end of 1946 India was drifting rapidly to chaos. The real power had passed from British hands; senior officials, anxious about their own future, were conscious that they were caretakers under notice and were disheartened; Ministers, paralysed by the communal situation, seemed unable to come to grips with the problems of administration; and the unparalleled communal riots in Calcutta, together with serious disorder in many parts of India, made it clear that nobody was in effective control.[1]

"Never did he show himself to greater advantage than during those fateful days when like a Titan he rushed from one danger spot to another to prop up the crumbling heavens."[2] From early November 1946 to late May 1947, Gandhi moved throughout Northern India, chiefly in Bengal and Bihar, often on foot, occasionally staying for months in a single village in the midst of an infested area; his purpose was to reassure the people, to instill trust and courage after the shattering experiences of communal bloodshed. June and July of 1947 were spent in Delhi, in consultations with the Government and the Congress high command; after this, he turned to Calcutta. Lord Mountbatten, anticipating increased carnage in the Punjab established in late July a Boundary Force in the Punjab Partition Areas, under the military command of Major-General

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1. Percival Griffiths, Modern India (London: Ernest Benn, 1957) p.85.
2. Pyarelal, op.cit., II, p.428.

"Pete" Rees, whom Mountbatten later described as "perhaps his ablest divisional commander in the Burma Campaign."[1] The force itself consisted of approximately 55,000 men with a high proportion of British officers; one of Mountbatten's associates called it "probably the largest military force ever collected in any one area of a country for the maintenance of law and order in peace-time."[2] Gandhi arrived in Calcutta on 9 August; Lord Mountbatten wired him there just seventeen days later:

> My dear Gandhiji,
>
> In the Punjab we have 55 thousand soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting.
>
> As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One Man Boundary Force, not forgetting his Second in Command, Mr. Suhrawardy.[3]

Gandhi's destination, early in that August of 1947, was not Calcutta, but Noakhali. He intended to stop over in Calcutta for a day, and then move on to Noakhali, where he anticipated serious disturbances on and after 15 August, the day of Independence. Immediately upon his arrival in Calcutta, though, Gandhi was met by several Muslim delegations which pleaded with him to stay; sporadic communal

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1. Alan Campbell-Johnson, Mission With Mountbatten (London: Robert Hale, 1951) p.175.
2. Ibid., p.139.
3. Gandhi, Correspondence with the Government, 1944-47 (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1959) p.277.

riots were occurring at that time, and the Muslim minority feared what might lie ahead. Gandhi agreed to postpone his departure and this move proved decisive. For on 11 August Shaheed Suhrawardy, then (until Independence,) de jure Chief Minister of Bengal, arrived in Calcutta and persuaded Gandhi to remain there indefinitely. Gandhi's consent rested on one condition: that Suhrawardy would live with him, under the same roof in a disturbed Muslim quarter of the city, without armed protection. Suhrawardy accepted the condition, and Gandhi wrote to Sardar Patel: "I have got stuck here and am now going to undertake a grave risk. Suhrawardy and I are going from today to stay together in a Muslim quarter. The future will reveal itself. Keep close watch."[1] Sardar replied; "So you have got detained in Calcutta and that too in a quarter which is a veritable shambles and a notorious den of gangsters and hooligans. And in what choice company too!"[2]

Suhrawardy was a Muslim leader who did not enjoy much Hindu confidence. He had been Chief Minister of Bengal during the Great Calcutta Killing and the carnage had been blamed partly on his unwillingness to quell Muslim demonstrations. Gandhi, however, knew that Suhrawardy exercised

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1. Pyarelal, op.cit., II, p.364.
2. Ibid., p.365.

substantial influence over Bengali Muslims, and he wanted to set an outstanding example of Hindu-Muslim comradeship. On 13 August, just two days before Independence, they moved together into "Hydari Mansion", "an old abandoned Muslim house in an indescribably filthy locality" of the city.[1] This immediately sparked a violent reaction: Hindu demonstrators besieged the house, smashed windows, demanded their departure. Gandhi met their attack with cool, firm reasoning. "I put it to you, young men," he argued, "how can I who am a Hindu by birth, a Hindu by creed and a Hindu of Hindus in my way of living be an 'enemy' of Hindus? Does this not show narrow intolerance on your part?"[2] The words worked, the Hindus withdrew, and the next forty-eight hours remained calm. Independence Day provoked demonstrations: but of friendship, not strife. Hindu-Muslim fraternization reached a new peak, and Gandhi's efforts were acclaimed as "the Calcutta Miracle". Gandhi himself, in touring the city with Suhrawardy, was struck by the transformation and wrote to a friend on a rare note of optimism, "It reminds me of old days in South Africa and the Khilafat days here. For the moment I am no enemy. Who knows how long this will last? Hindus and Muslims have become friends practically

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1. Ibid., p.365.
2. Ibid., p.367.

in a day."[1] Gandhi's prayer meetings were now being attended by hundreds of thousands; even the Muslim League passed a resolution on 24 August expressing "its deep sense of appreciation of the services rendered by Mahatma Gandhi to the cause of restoration of peace and good will between the communities in Calcutta..."[2]

But the test was yet to come. Continuous reports streamed into Calcutta of Punjab atrocities. Gandhi wired Nehru for advice on where he was most needed; Nehru hesitated, but, as the Punjab situation became more desperate, he cabled Gandhi on 31 August to leave for there.[3] On that same evening, however, violence began once more in Calcutta. At ten p.m. a large Hindu procession converged on Hydari Mansion with an injured Hindu in its midst; the crowd alleged that he had been attacked by Muslims and demanded that Gandhi take action against the outrage. It surged for hours around the building, and finally became uncontrollable and stormed in. Gandhi attempted to calm its leaders, but this time without success; he was attacked and only escaped through police intervention. The violence quickly gained momentum, and riots raged throughout the city. The London Times reported thirteen persons killed and

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1. Gandhi, Letters to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1961) p.245.
2. Pyarelal, op.cit., II, p.381.
3. Ibid., p.394.

seventy-five injured;[1] Gandhi wrote to Sardar Patel, "What was regarded as the 'Calcutta Miracle' has proved to be a nine days' wonder. I am pondering what my duty is in the circumstances."[2] When Rajagopalachari, then Provincial Governor of West Bengal, came to visit him on the evening of 1 September, Gandhi had already made his decision. He proposed a fast. "Can one fast against the goondas?" Rajaji asked. "I want to touch the hearts of those who are behind the goondas," Gandhi replied. "The hearts of the goondas may or may not be touched. It would be enough for my purpose if they realise that society at large has no sympathy with their aims or methods and that the peace-loving element is determined to assert itself or perish in the attempt." Rajaji urged him to "wait and watch a little," but Gandhi was adamant. "The fast has to be now or never. It will be too late afterwards. The minority community cannot be left in a parlous condition. My fast has to be preventive if it is to be of any good. I know I shall be able to tackle the Punjab too if I can control Calcutta. But if I falter now, the conflagration may spread..."[3]

"What my word in person cannot do," Gandhi said in his public statement that evening on the fast, "my fast may.

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1. London Times, 3 September 1947 (Dateline: Calcutta, 2 September). p.4.
2. Pyarelal, op.cit., p.406.
3. Ibid., p.407.

It may touch the hearts of all the warring elements in the Punjab if it does in Calcutta. I, therefore, begin fasting from 8.15 tonight to end only if and when sanity returns to Calcutta."[1] Looting, rioting, widespread demonstrations, and military action against the mobs marked the first day of the fast. The impact of Gandhi's move had not yet been felt; but he remained confident. "My fast is an appeal to everybody to search his heart. It should result in all-round self-purification. When the initial cleansing of the hearts has been effected, parties of Hindus and Muslims should go out together to patrol the troubled areas and relieve the police of its arduous duties."[2] On 3 September, the second day of the fast, quiet came to Calcutta. A mixed procession of Hindus and Muslims saw Gandhi and promised to reconcile their differences. Then the entire police force of North Calcutta, European and Indian, commenced a twenty-four hour fast in sympathy while remaining on duty. "The leaven has begun to work," Gandhi remarked.[3] On 4 September, the effect of the fast on Gandhi had begun to tell: he became weak, giddy, with a rapid faint pulse. He was a man seventy-eight years old.

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1. Ibid., p.409.
2. Ibid., p.412.
3. Ibid., p.418.

> Then the miracle happened. As the leaden hours crept by and slowly life ebbed out of the frail little man on the fasting bed, it caused a deep heart churning in all concerned, bringing the hidden lie to the surface. People came and confessed to him what they would have confided to no mortal ear. Hindus and Muslims combined in an all-out effort to save the precious life that was being offered as ransom for disrupted peace between brother and brother. Mixed processions, consisting of all communities, paraded through the affected parts of the city to restore communal harmony.[1]

Scores of members of Hindu "resistance groups", formed since Direct Action Day, admitted before Gandhi their role as instigators, and pledged maintenance of order. This was the kind of assurance that he had wanted, but it was not enough. "The function of my fast is to purify our hearts and intellects and to release our energies by overcoming our mental sluggishness, inertia, not to paralyze us or render us inactive."[2] A large gang of hooligans came to him; their ringleader made a full confession and offered, "I and the whole party under me will gladly submit to whatever penalty you may impose, only you should now end your fast." Gandhi replied, "My penalty for you is that you should go immediately among the Muslims and assure them full protection. The minute I am convinced that real change of heart has taken place, I will give up the fast."[3]

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1. Ibid., p.419.
2. Ibid., p.420.
3. Ibid., p.421.

Now, Calcutta was not only free from violence: it was mobbed with processions to Hydari Mansion clamouring for an end to the fast. At 6 p.m. on this third day of the fast a decisive break-through occurred: a deputation of leading citizens of Calcutta, representing all communities, came and pleaded with Gandhi. Gandhi demanded two promises from them: first, that communal violence would not recur in Calcutta; and second, that if it did recur, they would "not live to report failure," but lay down their lives to maintain order. If these pledges were given and broken then Gandhi vowed he would fast until death. "If you deceive me, if you say one thing and mean another in your heart, my death will be upon your head. I want a clear and straight answer. Your assurance must be in writing."[1] The deputation withdrew to another room, deliberated, argued, and agreed; Rajaji dictated the draft of the pledge: "We the undersigned promise to Gandhiji that now that peace and quiet have been restored in Calcutta once again, we shall never allow communal strife in the city and shall strive unto death to prevent it."[2] Gandhi immediately broke the fast: it had lasted seventy-three hours. Calcutta remained true to its word; communal violence ceased, not to return. "Gandhiji has achieved many things," said Rajagopalacharai, "but there

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1. Ibid., p.422.
2. Ibid., p.423.

has been nothing, not even independence, which is so truly wonderful, as his victory over evil in Calcutta."[1]

This has been the verdict of most historians: Gandhi rose to his greatest heights in the closing months of his life, and the purest success story in satyagraha is that of his 1947 Calcutta fast. V.P. Menon writes in his Transfer of Power in India:

> It is gratifying to note that while the north was in the throes of a communal holocaust, the rest of India remained comparatively peaceful. In Bengal, particularly in Calcutta, the situation might have become serious but for one man, and that man was Gandhiji... No word of Government could have given so much confidence and assurance as this one man alone had inspired in the minorities on either side.[2]

Western historians of this period have been equally unstinting in their tributes. "His triumph was complete," wrote E.W.R. Lumby in his description of the fast, "and the peace he brought was destined to endure. A League newspaper, acknowledging the debt Calcutta Muslims owed him, said 'he was ready to die so that they might live peacefully'. He had in fact worked a miracle, perhaps the greatest of modern times."[3]

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1. Tendulkar, op.cit., (1954) VIII, p.133.
2. V.P. Menon, op.cit., p.434.
3. E.W.R. Lumby, The Transfer of Power in India, 1945-1947, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954) p.193. See also Penderel Moon, Divide and Quit (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961) pp.248-49, 290, and P. Spear, op.cit., p.424.

Yet few commentators on Gandhi's last days have chosen to point out the supreme irony of the situation: the fact that Gandhi, renowned as India's great "freedom fighter", should have achieved most in the few short months after Independence had been attained. Behind this apparent irony lies the simple truth that Gandhi's goal was not merely National Independence. Over twenty years before, he had said, "The fight for Swaraj means not mere political awakening but an all around awakening — social, educational, moral, economic and political."[1] Now that the political goal had been attained, Gandhi could only remind the nation how much more was required. "The Congress has won political freedom, but it has yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom. These freedoms are harder than the political, if only because they are constructive, less exciting and not spectacular. All-embracing constructive work evokes the energy of all the units of the millions. The Congress has got the preliminary and necessary part of her freedom. The hardest has yet to come."[2] With this larger goal of swaraj in mind, and with a firm belief in the Constructive Programme as the means for its achievement, Gandhi drafted, on the day before his death, a Congress Resolution which sought "to disband the existing Congress organization and

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1. Young India, 26 August 1926, II, p.1231.
2. Pyarelal, op.cit., II, pp.677-78.

flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh."[1] The Congress, transformed into a people's service association, would direct the organization of the country into a system of panchayats, extending from the village to the national level. The Congress members, whose function Gandhi now saw exclusively in terms of social service, would then be brought into intimate contact with the needs of the villagers. This approach, Gandhi believed, would bring India closer to the goal of "social, moral, and economic" freedom for its "seven hundred thousand villages."[2] Only eleven days before drafting this resolution, which has since become known as Gandhi's "Last Will and Testament", he had ended, in Delhi, his last fast for Hindu-Muslim unity. Thus, Gandhi's activity during the last months of his life was directed entirely towards the problem of communal violence. Yet, as the Draft Resolution shows, he maintained until the end his belief in the Constructive Programme for meeting the long-term needs of India's development.

Gandhi has been called a politician or a saint, and both of these, and neither. One of his acquaintances in Government said "amongst saints he is a statesman, and amongst statesmen, a saint."[3] But Gandhi has seldom been

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1. Ibid., Appendix B, p.819.
2. Ibid., p.819.
3. R.G. Casey, An Australian in India (London: Hollis and Carter, 1947) p.60.

called a political theorist; indeed, on occasion, he has been dismissed as anything but that.[1] Gandhi was a political activist who confronted practical problems and immediate social issues; he remained intensely involved, throughout most of his life, in the Indian Nationalist Movement, and he derived continuing strength and inspiration from the historical situation in which he found himself. He thought always in terms of "experiments with Truth" rather than of constructing philosophical systems. But all this does not necessarily mean that Gandhi was not a political theorist.

One day during the Partition riots, Gandhi, in search of sustenance, reaffirmed his own faith in the power of the idea. "One active thought," he said, "proceeding from the depths, in its nascent purity and endowed with all the undivided intensity of one's being, can become dynamic and make history."[2] The thought which emerged from the depths of Gandhi's experience, and became "endowed with all the individual intensity of his being" was the conception that he shared with Vivekananda and Aurobindo of the divine nature of man and of Truth, the Absolute, as the ground of all being. Gandhi's aim, swaraj, and his method,

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1. Joan Bondurant, Conquest of Violence (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1958) p.7 and B.R. Nanda, op.cit., pp.8, 381.
2. Gandhi, quoted in Pyarelal, op.cit., I, p.353.

satyagraha, could not have been more deeply rooted in this view of human nature and the Absolute. The highest form of freedom was moral and spiritual in quality because man was essentially moral and spiritual; man became free when he realised this reality of his own self. Satyagraha, "holding fast to Truth," was the way in which the individual might best make this discovery, and then reveal it to others.

Gandhi, then, was an activist whose course of political and social action was directed by a particular theory of man and the Absolute; this theory was constantly used as a basis for self-examination, for experimentation with himself and his environment, and for analysis of social and political events and behaviour. It is quite easy to find instances where Gandhi, in his thought and action, seems to have been inconsistent; but it is always necessary to consider these instances in terms of a certain context of belief which he constructed. From his experiences in childhood, in London, and in South Africa, emerged a conceptual frame of reference within which Gandhi, as a political and social actor, moved about in a continuing search for areas of experimentation. The boundaries of this context of belief or frame of reference become readily identifiable if one attempts to imagine Gandhi acting within

the modern Indian historical situation, but wholly outside the philosophy which he developed: for example, as a violent revolutionary on the one hand, or an otherworldly recluse on the other. Gandhi once said, "I must respond to varying conditions, and yet remain changeless within."[1] If there was a changeless aspect of Gandhi's life and thought, it rested with those values which he formed, early in life, concerning man, Truth, and freedom; and his adherence to these values compelled, as one writer on Gandhi has observed, "a consistency impossible of achievement, even for the Mahatma himself."[2]

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1. Gandhi, Young India, 20 August 1925, II, p.553.
2. Hugh Tinker, Magnificent Failure? — The Gandhian Ideal in India After Sixteen Years (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1964) p.271.

CHAPTER VIII

TAGORE : FREEDOM AND NATIONALISM

> I regard the Poet as a sentinel warning us against the approach of enemies called Bigotry, Lethargy, Intolerance, Ignorance, Inertia and other members of that brood.[1]
>
> Gandhi, 1921

The Early Development of Tagore's Ideas on Nationalism

> ... truth is in unity, and therefore freedom is in its realization. The texts of our daily worship and meditation are for training our mind to overcome the barrier of separateness from the rest of existence and to realize advaitam, the Supreme Unity.... Also in the social or political field, the lack of freedom is based upon the spirit of alienation, on the imperfect realization of the One. There our bondage is in the tortured link of union. One may imagine that an individual who succeeds in dissociating himself from his fellows attains real freedom, inasmuch as all ties of relationship imply obligation to others. But we know that, though it may sound paradoxical, it is true that in the human world only a perfect arrangement of interdependence gives rise to freedom. The most individualistic of human beings who own no responsibility are the savages who fail to attain their fullness of manifestation. They live immersed in obscurity, like an ill-lighted fire that cannot liberate itself from its envelope of smoke. Only those may attain their freedom from the segregation of an eclipsed life who have the power to cultivate mutual understanding and co-operation. The history of the growth of freedom is the history of the perfection of human relationship.[2]

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1. Gandhi, Young India, 13 October 1921, I, p.669.
2. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, pp.186-88.

This view of individual freedom and social harmony had been suggested by Vivekananda; it had then been developed by Aurobindo; and Gandhi had applied it to the resolution of India's social strife. Tagore welcomed all these efforts; but he insisted on developing the idea in still another direction, until it challenged the dominant political belief of his age. and of modern Indian politics: the gospel of Nationalism. Aurobindo had extolled the ideal of universal harmony, but he had not singled out Indian nationalism as a threat to that ideal; his criticism was rather reserved for the Western Nation-State system. Tagore asserted that in principle there was no distinction: "Nationalism is a great menace," he declared; and with this generalization Aurobindo may have agreed. But Tagore added: "It is the particular thing which for years has been at the bottom of India's troubles."[1] None of the three other thinkers considered, here, would have gone this far; and Tagore not only declared his position in unequivocal terms, he made the theme of individual freedom versus the Nation-State a central feature of his social and political thought. This chapter will briefly consider his criticism of nationalism and of its various manifestations in modern India.

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1. R. Tagore, Nationalism, p.111.

Tagore's case against nationalism was originally made against the Western Nation-State system; and at its base was his disillusionment over the events of the Boer War. Appalled with the brutality and futility of that struggle, and sensing the deeper implication of the attitudes which it represented, Tagore expressed his feelings in a sonnet composed on the last day of the nineteenth century.

> The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred.
> The naked passion of self-love of Nations, in its drunken delirium of greed, is dancing to the clash of steel and the howling verses of vengeance.
> The hungry self of the Nation shall burst in a violence of fury from its own shameless feeding.
> For it has made the world its food...[1]

The poem concludes with a warning to India to "keep watch," and,

> Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the proud and the powerful
> With your white robe of simpleness.
> Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul.
> Build God's throne daily upon the ample bareness of your poverty
> And know that what is huge is not great and pride is not everlasting.[2]

The events of the early twentieth century only increased Tagore's fear of nationalism, and his desire for

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1. Tagore, "The Sunset of the Century" in Nationalism, p.133.
2. Ibid., p.135.

international harmony. In his famous poem Gitanjali of 1912, he yearned for an age of freedom,

> Where the mind is without fear and
> the head is held high;
> Where knowledge is free;
> Where the world has not been broken
> up into fragments by narrow domestic
> walls;[1]

With the outbreak of the First World War, all Tagore's fears seemed to him confirmed; his cry of protest came in three lectures on Nationalism, delivered in 1916. These comprised a frontal attack on an idea which had then reached its apogee, and Tagore directed this attack against nationalism throughout the world: he called his lectures "Nationalism in the West," "Nationalism in Japan," and "Nationalism in India."

The primary concern that dominates these lectures is that of the suppression of individual freedom by the cult of nationalism. "This nationalism," he begins, "is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world of the present age, and eating into its moral vitality."[2] In Japan, "the voluntary submission of the whole people to the trimming of their minds and clipping of their freedom by their government, which through various

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1. R. Tagore, Gitanjali (Song Offerings) (London: Macmillan 1920), p.27.
2. Tagore, Nationalism, p.16.

educational agencies regulates their thoughts, manufactures their feelings" has led to an acceptance of an "all-pervading mental slavery with cheerfulness and pride because of their nervous desire to turn themselves into a machine of power called the Nation..."[1] In the West, nationalism has corrupted the colonizers no less than the colonies. "Not merely the subject races," Tagore told America, "but you who live under the delusion that you are free, are everyday sacrificing your freedom and humanity to this fetish of nationalism, living in the dense poisonous atmosphere of world-wide suspicion and greed and panic."[2]

Tagore was most distressed, not with the prevalence of nationalism in the West, but with its infection of India. The idea was a Western importation, but Tagore realized that his own countrymen, and especially his Bengali contemporaries, had developed it into a peculiar Indian type. Bankimchandra, Vivekananda, Pal, and Aurobindo were the main philosophers of early Indian nationalism; and, ironically, as Tagore was in America, preaching against nationalism, C.R. Das, another Bengali, was telling his Indian audiences, "I find in the conception of my country the expression also of divinity. With me nationality is no mere

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1. Tagore, Nationalism, pp.26-27.
2. Ibid., p.26.

political conception, borrowed from the philosophy of the West ... I value this principle of nationality as I value the principle of morality and religion."[1]

The greatest disservice which nationalism had rendered India, Tagore argued, was to have directed the country's attention away from its primary needs. "Our real problem in India," Tagore contended, "is not political. It is social."[2] The nationalist urge leads to a pursuit of political goals to the neglect of pressing social problems. Neither the Congress Moderates nor the Extremists realized this critical need. The former had "no constructive idea," no sense that "what India most needed was constructive work coming from within herself."[3] They lost power "because the people soon came to realize how futile was the half policy adopted by them."[4] The Extremists pretended to root their programme in traditional Indian truths but, in reality, they were nothing but advocates of Western nationalism. "Their ideals were based on Western history. They had no sympathy with the special problems of India. They did not recognize the patent fact that there were causes in our social organization which made the Indian incapable of coping with the alien ... the domination in India of the

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1. C.R.Das, India for Indians (Madras: Ganesh, 1918) p.9.
2. Tagore, Nationalism, p.97.
3. Ibid., p.12.
4. Ibid., p.113.

caste system, and the blind and lazy habit of relying upon the authority of traditions that are incongruous anachronisms in the present age."[1] Nationalism cannot prompt a social and moral reform of the nature that is needed; rather, it will only whet the popular appetite for increased political warfare. The real task before India is that of building a good society, and "society is the expression of those moral and spiritual aspirations of man which belong to his higher nature."[2] If India pursues political independence to the exclusion of all else, she may attain a sovereign state; it will be one, however, in which the old social and moral maladies are not purged but magnified. Above all, a narrow quest for political liberty will only obscure India's real goal, which must always remain that of moral and spiritual freedom for the individual in society.

> Our social ideals create the human world, but when our mind is diverted from them to greed of power then in that state of intoxication we live in a world of abnormality where our strength is not health and our liberty is not freedom. Therefore political freedom does not give us freedom when our mind is not free. An automobile does not create freedom of movement, because it is a mere machine. When I myself am free I can use the automobile for the purpose of my freedom.
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> We must never forget in the present day that those people who have got their political freedom are not necessarily free, they are

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1. Ibid., pp.113-114.
2. Ibid., p.120.

merely powerful. The passions which are unbridled in them are creating huge organizations of slavery in the disguise of freedom. Those who have made the gain of money their highest end are unconsciously selling their life and soul to rich persons or to the combinations that represent money. Those who are enamoured of their political power and gloat over their extension of dominion over foreign races gradually surrender their own freedom and humanity to the organizations necessary for holding other peoples in slavery. In the so-called free countries the majority of the people are not free, they are driven by the minority to a goal which is not even known to them. This becomes possible only because people do not acknowledge moral and spiritual freedom as their object. They create huge eddies with their passions, and they feel dizzily inebriated with the mere velocity of their whirling movement, taking that to be freedom. But the doom which is waiting to overtake them is as certain as death — for man's truth is moral truth and his emancipation is in the spiritual life.

The general opinion of the majority of the present-day nationalists in India is that we have come to a final completeness in our social and spiritual ideals, the task of the constructive work of society having been done several thousand years before we were born, and that now we are free to employ all our activities in the political direction. We never dream of blaming our social inadequacy as the origin of our present helplessness, for we have accepted as the creed of our nationalism that this social system has been perfected for all time to come by our ancestors. ... This is the reason why we think that our one task is to build a political miracle of freedom upon the quicksand of social slavery. ... Those of us in India who have come under the delusion that mere political freedom will make us free have accepted their lessons from the West as the gospel truth and lost their faith in humanity. We must remember whatever weakness we cherish in our society will become the source of

> danger in politics. The same inertia which leads us to our idolatry of dead forms in social institutions will create in our politics prison-houses with immovable walls. The narrowness of sympathy which makes it possible for us to impose upon a considerable portion of humanity the galling yoke of inferiority will assert itself in our politics in creating the tyranny of injustice.[1]

The Tagore-Gandhi Controversy

Many of the ideas which Tagore voices in the above passage are in profound agreement with those of Gandhi, as well as with Vivekananda and Aurobindo. All agree, ultimately, on the primary need for social reform in India, as well as on the supremacy of moral or spiritual freedom. Tagore's unique contribution rests with his early and emphatic assertion that though India's adoption of nationalism might further the struggle for Independence, it could only thwart the essential quest for moral and spiritual freedom. This point of view inevitably sparked off a controversy with India's arch-nationalist, Mahatma Gandhi.

"Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian."[2] This is Gandhi, replying to Tagore's criticisms; and the view which he expresses here accurately represents his general position on Indian nationalism. It

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1. Ibid., pp.120-123.
2. Gandhi, Young India, 13 October 1921, I, p.673.

may rightly be argued that Gandhi did not advocate many of the forms of nationalism which had sprung up around 1900, in Bengal. Gandhi did not see the Nation as a transcendent entity, possessed of a soul and a form of freedom of its own, apart from its individual human components. He thought of swaraj in terms, first of the individual, and then of society. "Swaraj of the people," he said, "means the sum total of the Swaraj (self-rule) of individuals." Yet, although Gandhi was not an exponent of nationalism after the fashion of Pal or C.R.Das, his ideas did support other forms of nationalism which he frankly endorsed, and which, as Tagore soon discovered, posed threats to individual freedom.

In March 1919, Gandhi called upon the people of India to observe 6 April as a mass hartal: a day of fasting, public meetings, and suspension of labour. The intent was to mobilize popular opposition to the government's enactment of the Rowlatt Bills; the effect of the hartal was to demonstrate the considerable power potential of the non-co-operation programme. On 12 April, Tagore wrote to Gandhi from Shantiniketan urging him to exercise caution in the use of non-co-operation; the letter represents the first written evidence of Tagore's qualms over Gandhi's emerging political leadership. "Power in all its forms is irrational," Tagore began, "it is like the horse that drags

the carriage blind-folded." He expressed his concern over recent acts of government repression, and questioned the good that could result from pressing the campaign further. "I have always felt," he continued, "and said accordingly, that the great gift of freedom can never come to a people through charity. We must win it before we can own it. And India's opportunities for winning it will come to her when she can prove that she is morally superior to the people who rule her by their right of conquest." The present non-co-operation movement, he implied, did not seem to him representative of India's moral superiority, and he concluded this letter with these telling lines: "I pray most fervently that nothing that tends to weaken our spiritual freedom may intrude into your marching line, that martyrdom for the cause of truth may never degenerate into fanaticism for mere verbal forms, descending into the self-defence that hides itself behind a moral name."[1]

Tagore sailed for England and America early the next year. While abroad, he seems to have made up his mind as to whether Gandhi's movement had in fact "degenerated into fanaticism for mere verbal forms," hiding itself "behind a moral name." "I wish I were the little creature Jack," he

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1. R.K. Prabhu and Ravindra Kelekav, editors, Truth Called Them Differently (Tagore-Gandhi Controversy) (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1961) pp.14-17.

wrote from Chicago in reference to the non-co-operation campaign, "whose one mission is to kill the Giant Abstraction, which is claiming the sacrifice of individuals all over the world under highly tainted masks of delusion."[1] In July 1921, he returned to India, after fourteen months abroad, to confront the campaign at its peak. His battle against the Giant Abstraction soon began in earnest.

On 29 August, Tagore delivered at a Calcutta public meeting an address entitled "The Call of Truth." This is a remarkable commentary for it offered, at once, both a trenchant criticism of Gandhi's leadership, and an eloquent defence of individual freedom with which Gandhi, above all Indian leaders of this time, had identified himself. Tagore begins his remarks with a proposition common to Vivekananda, Aurobindo, and Gandhi: it is in the nature of man to struggle for self-realization or spiritual freedom; this must remain the individual's highest aim, and success may only be gained through conquest of his own self.[2] Reiterating a maxim which both he and Gandhi had stressed for the last decade, Tagore said, "They who have failed to attain Swaraj within themselves must lose it in the outside world too."[3] Political independence was a great desideratum. But

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1. R.Tagore, Letters to A Friend, ed. by C.F.Andrews (London: Allen & Unwin, 1928), p.132.
2. R. Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p.253.
3. Ibid., p.254.

it was not swaraj; nor could it even ensure swaraj if not accompanied by a moral or spiritual transformation of the individual in society. Tagore often expressed his ideas through metaphor; in the "Call of Truth" he drew on this medium to set forth his conception of the relation of social and moral to political reform. The metaphor is his own, but the idea was shared by Gandhi:

> When we turn our gaze upon the progress of other nations, the political cart-horse comes prominently into view — on it seems to depend wholly the speed of the vehicle. We forget that the cart behind the horse must also be in a fit state to move; its wheels must have the right alignment, its parts must have been properly assembled. The cart is the product not simply of materials on which saw and hammer had worked; thought, energy and application have gone into its making. We have seen countries that are outwardly free, but as they are drawn by the horse of politics the rattle rouses all the neighbourhood from sleep and the jolting makes the limbs of the passengers ache; the vehicles break down repeatedly on their way and to put them in running order is a terrific business. Yet they are vehicles of a sort, after all. The fragments that pass for our country not only lack cohesion but are comprised of parts at odds with one another. To hitch it to anger or avarice or some other passion, drag it along painfully with much din and bustle, and call this political progress! How long could the driving force last? Is it not wiser, then, to keep the horse in the stable for the time and take up the task, first, of putting the vehicle in good shape?[1]

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1. Ibid., pp.259-60.

From this passage may be anticipated the nature of the criticism that follows: it consists, in effect, of Tagore turning Gandhi's own arguments against him. While abroad, Tagore says, he had heard nothing but high praise of the non-co-operation movement; he had come to believe, from this, that India was at last on the path to "real liberation."[1] Then, in a chilling paragraph, he tells of what he found on his return to India:

> So, in the excited expectation of breathing the air of a new-found freedom, I hurried back to my homeland. But what I have seen and felt troubles me. Something seems to be weighing on the people's spirit; a stern pressure is at work; it makes everyone talk in the same voice and make the same gestures.[2]

This climate of opinion, Tagore believed, was a manifestation of nationalism at its worst. "Slave mentality" of this nature, rather than alien rule, is, he said, "our real enemy and through its defeat alone can swaraj within and without come to us."[3] Gandhi's directives, which urged, among other things, the manual spinning of yarn, and burning of foreign cloth, were not being weighed by critical minds; rather, they had been accepted as dogma. And, "As dogma takes the place of reason, freedom will give way to some kind of despotism."[4] Tagore himself remained highly critical

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1. Ibid., p.262.
2. Ibid., pp.262-63.
3. Ibid., p.270.
4. Ibid., p.268.

of Gandhi's directives; he found Gandhi's dicta on spinning and cloth-burning negative and destructive. "Swaraj is not a matter of mere self-sufficiency in the production of cloth. Its real place is within us — the mind with its diverse power goes on building swaraj for itself."[1] These particular tenets of Gandhi struck Tagore as medieval in their compulsive desire for simplicity; they closed doors to economic advance. In their rabid advocacy of a narrow form of swadeshi they cramped Indian attitudes into a restrictive provincial mould, inhibiting the mind's "diverse power" to go on "building swaraj for itself." "As everywhere else, swaraj in this country has to find its basis in the mind's unfoldment, in knowledge, in scientific thinking, and not in shallow gestures."[2] Gandhi's approach to social reform, Tagore contended, would not stimulate the "mind's unfoldment," but rather restrict its development and lead to its atrophy. On a national level this approach would result in a deplorable attitude of isolationism and hostility toward the rest of the world. "The Call of Truth" ends with a characteristic appeal to answer the "urgent call" of "universal humanity" by shedding the limitations of narrow nationalism, and recognizing "the vast dimensions of India

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1. Ibid., p.268.
2. Ibid., p.268.

in its world context."[1] "Henceforth, any nation which seeks isolation for itself must come into conflict with the time-spirit and find no peace. From now onward the plane of thinking of every nation will have to be international. It is the striving of the new age to develop in the mind this faculty of universality."[2]

The Gandhi-Tagore controversy thus focused on two aspects of the meaning of freedom. Tagore argued, first, that on a domestic level, Indians had placed themselves in bondage through their unthinking acceptance of arbitrary dicta; they idolized a leader who, however saintly, had harnessed their blind allegiance to a gospel of retardation rather than growth. A second and related feature of Gandhi's teaching was its implications on an international level. Gandhi's ideas, Tagore argued, had fostered, for the most part, an unhealthy sense of separateness which foolishly spurned the knowledge and advances of the Western world. Each of these attitudes inhibited India's growth and thus restricted her freedom.

Gandhi replied to the first of Tagore's charges that he did not wish to produce a "deathlike sameness in the nation," but rather to use the spinning wheel to

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1. Ibid., p.272.
2. Ibid., p.271.

"realize the essential and living oneness of interest among India's myriads."[1] Spinning was not intended to replace all other forms of activity, but rather to symbolize "sacrifice for the whole nation." "If the Poet span half an hour daily his poetry would gain in richness. For it would then represent the poor man's wants and woes in a more forcible manner than now."[2] Spinning for Gandhi, then, was a symbolic form of self-sacrifice for the masses; Tagore, however, remained suspicious of any such abstract appeal, and tended to identify this symbolism with aspects of Indian nationalism. Moreover, when Tagore accused Gandhi of narrow provincialism, the latter replied, "I hope I am as great a believer in free air as the great Poet. I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."[3] And, when Tagore warned him of the inevitable danger inherent in his nationalism, Gandhi argued, "My patriotism is not exclusive; it is calculated not only not to hurt any other nation but to benefit all in the true sense of the word. India's freedom as conceived by me can never be a menace to the world."[4] Yet, despite these

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1. Gandhi, Young India, 5 November 1925, II, p.712.
2. Ibid., p.712.
3. Gandhi, Young India, 1 June 1921, I, p.460.
4. Gandhi, Young India, 3 April 1924, II, p.2.

assurances, Gandhi did espouse an extreme form of Indian nationalism. "The interests of my country," he once wrote, "are identical with those of my religion";[1] and, on another occasion, "The attainment of national independence is to me a search after truth."[2] Considering the fact that Gandhi held nothing more sacred than his religion and the quest for truth, it is clear how highly he placed the interests of his country and the struggle for Indian Independence. Tagore detected in such feelings a threat to individual freedom. That he himself was reviled by his countrymen for his heretical criticism of the non-co-operation movement, and accused of everything from high treason to an inveterate jealousy of Gandhi, suggests that his fear of the Giant Abstraction was not altogether unjustified.

Gandhi did contribute, as a political leader and thinker, to the growth of Indian nationalism as much as any figure of this century; and nowhere does he seem to recognize the implicit danger in nationalism to individual freedom, as well as to India's own free development vis à vis the rest of the world. On the contrary, he dismissed all attacks on Indian nationalism, not only from Tagore, but also from his Western friends, as totally without foundation.

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1. Gandhi, Young India, 23 February 1922, I, p.681.
2. Tendulkar, op.cit., III, p.273.

Charles Andrews, perhaps his closest British friend, wrote to Gandhi with shock and dismay, in September 1921, concerning the burning of foreign cloth. "The picture of your lighting that great pile," Andrews said, "including beautiful fabrics, shocked me intensely. We seem to be losing sight of the great beautiful world to which we belong and concentrating selfishly on India, and this must (I fear) lead back to the old bad selfish nationalism. If so, we get into the vicious circle from which Europe is now trying so desperately to escape."[1] Gandhi replied, "In all I do or advise, the infallible test I apply is, whether the particular action will hold good in regard to the dearest and the nearest."[2] He then concludes, "Experience shows that the richest gifts must be destroyed without compensation and hesitation if they hinder one's moral progress."[3] On this point of view, Tagore made a telling observation: "Experience ... has led me to dread, not so much evil itself, as tyrannical attempts to create goodness. Of punitive police, political or moral, I have a wholesome horror. The state of slavery which is thus brought on is the worst form of cancer to which humanity is subject."[4] Tagore, almost alone

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1. Charles Andrews quoted in Young India, 1 September, 1921, I, p.557.
2. Ibid., p.559.
3. Ibid., p.559.
4. R. Tagore, Reminiscences (London: Macmillan, 1920) p.128.

in his time, insisted not only that there may be more than one path to "moral progress," but also that the greatest obstacle to be found on each of them was the "slave mentality" that characterized nationalism. This was his contribution to the Indian idea of freedom.

CONCLUSION

Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi and Tagore contributed more to the development of modern Indian social and political thought than any other thinkers of their time. The general nature of their contribution was twofold. Their first task, as they saw it, was to respond to the Western impact through the formulation of a social and political philosophy which would meet the demands of a modern India. Their approach sought to draw conceptual correspondences between Western ideas and traditional Indian beliefs. The necessity of accepting Western ideas on political freedom and social equality had become apparent to Vivekananda before the close of the nineteenth century. It was equally evident to these four thinkers that the method of this acceptance must be through assimilation: the development of a social and political philosophy which would draw upon the resources of the Indian tradition. The subsequent attempt at "preservation by reconstruction," then, involved the reinterpretation and use of ancient Indian language and symbols, as well as philosophical themes, in a manner that might at once admit the most radical innovations, and still maintain continuity with the past.

The other contribution of this school of thought rests in its response to fundamental questions of political

philosophy: problems concerning the nature of man and of an Absolute, the right relation of the individual to society and the nature of the good society, and a method of social and political change. The essential agreement among the members of this school on each of these questions is significant; equally important, however, are the various ways in which each thinker developed certain aspects of these questions. One main purpose of this paper has been to illustrate how all four thinkers began with similar assumptions on the nature of man, the Absolute, and the meaning of freedom; and then how each contributed, in a distinctive way, through his individual treatment of particular political and social problems, to the construction of a modern Indian philosophy of freedom.

If emphasis were to be placed upon any one aspect of the idea of freedom as it has been examined in this thesis, it should be on that of its essential quality: it is, above all, Indian. The consideration which this school gave to problems of political thought becomes significant when seen within the Indian context. The contribution made by each member of the school revolves around the use which each made of the Indian tradition: the insistence by all that the Indian experience must provide the reference point for the conception, development, and implementation of each idea.

Vivekananda, in the words of Professor A.L.Basham, "more than any other teacher in the India of his time, taught his fellow Indians how to assimilate the old with the new." The accuracy of this assessment may be tested through an examination of the themes which came to dominate Indian political and social thought in this century. The ideas of freedom, social harmony, and a way of right action, as set forth by Vivekananda, directed, not only the premises of later Indian thinkers, but also the way in which they used their tradition to shape these premises.

No member of Vivekananda's school used his tradition more skilfully than Gandhi. His achievement may be appreciated by focusing on the two main pillars of his thought, swaraj and satyagraha. Together, these two ideas represent the most significant conceptual relationship in modern Indian thought; they epitomize his school's response to basic problems of political philosophy. And they do this in a manner which is emphatically Indian. Gandhi conceived swaraj and satyagraha in such a way as to embody a vast wealth of traditional associations, symbols, images, and beliefs. His use of the Indian tradition charged these concepts with their abundant meaning; the Indian social and political experience directed the purpose and the presuppositions that determined their nature. Together, they comprise the essence of the Indian idea of freedom.

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